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# ONLY AN ENSIGN.

## A Tale of the Retreat from Cabul.

By JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE," "LADY WEDDERBURN'S WISH," ETC.

77866

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"Come what come may,
Time and the Hour runs through the roughest day."—*Macbeth.*

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# PREFACE.

To have entered, more fully than I have done, into the events and fighting prior to the Retreat from Cabul, would have proved unsuitable for the purpose of my story, and for these events I must refer the reader to history or the newspapers of the time.

An officer of the Queen's 44th Regiment escaped death in the Khyber Pass in the mode narrated in its place, by wrapping the regimental colour round him; and strange and varied as the adventures of Captain Waller may appear, after the last fatal stand was made by our troops, some such incidents actually occurred to a Havildar of the Shah's Ghoorka Regiment, after its complete destruction in Afghanistan, so there is much that is real woven up with my story.

Fiction, according to Sir Francis Bacon, infuses in literature that which History denies, and in some measure satisfies the mind with shadows, when it cannot enjoy the substance—the shadows of an ideal world. "Art is long and life is short, so we do wisely to live in as many worlds as we can."

25, TAVISTOCK ROAD, WESTBOURNE PARK,
*August*, 1871.

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# ONLY AN ENSIGN.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE TIME WILL COME.

"*Le jour viendra*—it is the motto of our family—given to us by Henry VI. 'The day will come,'" said old Lord Lamorna, proudly, as he lay back in his easy chair, with his elbows resting on the arms thereof, and the tips of his upraised fingers placed together, as if he was about to pray; "and most applicable is that motto to you, nephew Richard, for I am sure that when you are my age you will regret not having taken my advice."

Richard Trevelyan smiled, but looked somewhat uneasily at his younger brother Downie.

"You are too rich to throw yourself away, and too well-born even for the most highly accomplished daughter of a cotton-lord, or knighted mill-owner," resumed his stately old uncle, sententiously; "a fellow knighted too probably for dirty ministerial

work; but assume a virtue if you have it not, and let us see you——"

"Excuse me, my lord—excuse me, my dear uncle. I have no desire to—to marry; why you—yourself——"

"Don't cite me, Richard. You are only forty-three, if so much" (and here, for the information of our young lady readers, we may mention that Richard is *not* the hero of these pages). "I am past seventy, yet I may marry yet, and do you all out of the title," added Lamorna, with a laugh like a cackle.

"My brother Dick is certainly the most listless of men," said Downie, as he selected some grapes with the embossed scissors, and filled his glass with chateau d'Yquem.

"I don't think that I am so," retorted Richard.

"Downie is right," said Lord Lamorna. "Why do you not go into Parliament?—I have two snug pocket boroughs here in Cornwall—and on one hand attack routine and red-tapeism like a Radical; on the other hand, denounce retrenchment and cowardly peace-at-any-price, like a Tory of the old school. You would certainly be popular with both parties by that *rôle*, and do good to the country at large."

"I have no turn for politics, uncle."

"Diplomacy then—many of our family have

figured as diplomats; I was ambassador to Russia, after Waterloo, and in the olden time more than one of our family have been so to the Courts of Scotland, France, and Brandenburg; and I trust we all refuted the axiom of Sir Henry Wotton, 'that an ambassador was an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country.'"

"I have no taste for diplomacy."

"What the devil *have* you a taste for?" asked his uncle, testily; "not domestic life, as I can't get you to marry, like Downie here; and you soon left the army, or tired of Her Majesty's service."

Richard flushed for a moment, and held his full wine glass between him and the light, as if to test the colour and purity of its contents.

"I know what bachelor London life is—another style of thing, of course, from yours, Downie—that which someone calls the hard-working life, which begins at two P.M. one day, and ends at four A.M. next morning. There are the parks; the club, with its bow-window; flirtations at balls and assemblies; the opera, and parties to Greenwich; and then there is the darker picture of doing business with old Messrs. Bill Stamp and Cent.-per-Cent., in some dingy little den off the Strand. A bad style of thing it is to meddle with the long-nosed fellows in the discounting line; just as bad as—and often the sequence to—running after actresses or opera-

singers. You may love them if you like; but, great Heavens! never stoop to the madness of committing matrimony with any of them, or for a moment forget the family to which you belong, and the ancient title that is your inheritance."

All this was said with undisguised point and pomposity; the cold grey eyes of Downie Trevelyan had a strange, sour smile in them; and Richard's face grew more flushed than ever now.

Dinner was over in the stately dining-room of Rhoscadzhel; Mr. Jasper Funnel, the portly, florid, and white-haired butler, had placed the glittering crystal decanters before his master, who, with two nephews, Richard and Downie Trevelyan, were lingering over their wine; while in the western light of a September evening, through the tall plate-glass windows that reached from the richly-carpeted floor to the painted and gilded ceiling, the Isles of Scilly—the Casserites of the Greeks, the rocks consecrated by the pagan Cornavi to the Sun—could be seen at the far horizon, literally cradled in the golden blaze of his setting in the sea; for the house of Rhoscadzhel, in which our story opens, stands near the Land's End, in the brave old Duchy of Cornwall.

Audley Trevelyan, tenth Lord Lamorna, took his title from that little bay or cove which was one of the most romantic spots on the bluff Cornish coast,

until it was unfortunately selected by certain utilitarian speculators as a site for granite works; and near it is a place called the Trewoofe, a triple entrenchment having a subterranean passage, wherein Launcelot Lord Lamorna, with some other Cornish cavaliers, hid themselves in time of defeat from the troopers of Fairfax, as the tourist may find duly recorded in his "John Murray."

He was in his seventieth year; pale in face and thin in figure, and with his accurate evening costume, for his valet always dressed him for dinner even when alone, the old peer in every gesture and tone displayed the easy bearing of a polished man of the world, and of the highest bearing—keen but cold, calm and unimpressionable.

He had yet much of the wasted beau about his appearance; he wore rosettes on his shoes and still adhered to a frilled shirt front and black watered silk ribbon for his gold eye-glass, with a coat having something of the high collar and cut peculiar to the days when George IV. was king. His features were fine and delicately modelled; his nose a perfect aquiline, with nostrils arched and thin, his snow-white hair was all brushed back to conceal the bald places and to display more fully a forehead of which he had been vain in youth from a fancied resemblance to that of Lord Byron. In short the Apollo of many a ball-room was now indeed a lean

and slippered pantaloon, but still careful to a degree in costume and all the niceties of cuffs and studs and rings.

Calm and self-possessed as he appeared, when now lying back in his down easy-chair, sipping his iced wine and playing with the diamond that glittered on his wasted hand, and which had been a farewell gift from the Empress of Russia, he had been much of a *roué* in his youth, and consequently was not disposed to enquire too closely into the affairs of his nephew.

Downie Trevelyan was already married, nearly to his uncle's satisfaction, his wife being the daughter of a poor but noble family; and as for Richard, he might run away with as many humble girls as he chose, provided he did not marry any of them, or make that which his haughty uncle and monetary patron would never forgive—a *mésalliance;* for Lord Lamorna was a man full of strong aristocratic prejudices, and a master in all the tactics of society, and of his somewhat exclusive, and occasionally selfish class.

His lordship's false teeth—a magnificent Parisian set that had cost him some fifty guineas—would have chattered at the idea of any member of his family making a mistake in matrimony. He *had* heard ugly whispers about Richard, but never could discover aught that was tangible. If it existed,

Heavens! how were Burke, Debrett and Co. to record it when the time came that it could no longer be concealed?

Should any *mésalliance* be the case, he had vowed often that the barren title should go without one acre of land to his eldest nephew; and he would have willed that past him too had it been in his power to do so; but though a sordid Scottish Earl of Caithness once sold his title to a Highland Chieftain, and caused one of the last clan-battles to be fought in Scotland, such things cannot be done now.

The old man had one ever present, ever prevailing idea—the honour and dignity of the family—the Cornish Trevelyans of Rhoscadzhel and Lamorna.

His two nephews were men in the prime of life, but Downie was three years younger than his brother.

Richard Pencarrow Trevelyan, the elder and prime favourite with their uncle, was a remarkably handsome man, with fine regular features that closely resembled those of the old peer; but Richard had been reared at Sandhurst, been in the army and seen much of a rougher life than his uncle. He had a free bold bearing, an ample chest, an athletic form and muscular limbs, which riding, shooting and handling the bat and the oar had all developed to the full, and which his simple costume,

—for he was fresh with his gun and his game-bag, from the bleak Cornish moors and mountain sides—advantageously displayed.

His dark blue eyes that were almost black, and seemed so by night, had a keen but open expression, his mouth suggested good humour, his white and regular teeth, perfect health, and his voice had in it a chord that rendered it most pleasant to the ear. Dark eyebrows and a heavy moustache imparted much of character to his face.

His brother, Downie Trevelyan, had never been an idler like Richard. Educated at Rugby and Corpus Christi, Oxford, he had been duly called to the bar by the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, and was now in good practice as a Barrister in London. He had all the air and bearing of a gentleman of good style; but he was less handsome than Richard; had less candour of expression in eye and manner; indeed, his eyes were like cold grey steel, and were quick, restless, and at times furtive in their glances; and they never smiled, even when his mouth seemed to do so.

Unlike Richard, he was closely shaven, all save a pair of very short and legal looking whiskers. To please his uncle was one of the unwearying tasks of his life; and even now, with this view, he was in the most accurate evening dress, thus affording a complete contrast to the rough and unceremonious

tweed-suit worn by his brother—his coat broadly lapelled with black silk *moiré*, his vest with three buttons, *en suite* with his shirt studs, which were encrusted with brilliants. His cold formality of manner rendered his periodical visits to Rhoscadzhel somewhat dull to Lord Lamorna, for somehow few people cared much for Mr. Downie Trevelyan. He had married judiciously and early in life, and had now several children; and thus, while joining his uncle in reprehending or rallying Richard on his supposed anti-matrimonial views, his cold, pale eyes, were wandering over the appurtenances, the comforts and splendour of that magnificent apartment, in which he was mentally appraising everything, from the steel fire-irons, to the gold and silver plate that glittered on the carved walnut wood side-board, whereon were displayed many beautiful cups, groups and statuettes (race-trophies of Ascot, Epsom and other courses) which had been won in Lamorna's younger days, when his stud was second to none in England, and certainly equal to that of Lord Eglinton in Scotland; yet he had never been a gambler, or a "horsey man," being too highly principled in one instance, and too highly bred in the other; and so we say, while the legal eyes of Downie appraised all, he thought of his eldest son, Audley Trevelyan, then a subaltern in a dashing Hussar Regiment, and marvelled in his heart, if *he*

should ever reign as Lord of Rhoscadzhel, manor and chace, with all its moors and tin-mines.

"You were right to marry young, Downie," said the old lord, resuming the theme of their conversation after a pause, adding, as if he almost divined the thoughts of his younger nephew, "your boy Audley is, I hear from General Trecarrel, a handsome fellow."

"He is a perfect Trevelyan, my lord," replied Downie, who was studious in always according the title to his relative, "and then my daughter, Gartha, bids fair to equal her mother, who was one of the handsomest women in London."

"To see your family rising about you thus, must afford you intense pleasure, Downie; but I cannot understand our friend Dick here at all. My years may not be many now, and I do not wish my hereditary estate to change hands often, or my lands to be scattered even after I am done with them."

"I do not comprehend your fears, my dear uncle," said Richard, smiling; "your estates can never lack heirs while God spares me—and then there is Downie——"

"And his son Audley the Hussar—you would say?"

"Exactly," replied Richard, but in a strange faint voice, and as he spoke he felt that the keen grey eyes of Downie were regarding him attentively by

the waxen lights of the chandelier, which Mr. Jasper Funnel and two tall footmen had just illuminated, at the same time drawing the heavy curtains of crimson damask over the last flash of the setting sun, and the ruddy sea whose waves were rolling in blue and gold, between the bluffs of Land's End and the rocky Isles of Scilly.

"You cannot be a woman-hater, Dick?"

"No—far from it," replied Richard, as a soft expression stole over his manly face; "there can be no such thing in nature."

"The truth is—but take your wine—I strongly fear, that during your military peregrinations, you have got yourself entangled now—and unworthily perhaps."

"My lord—you are mistaken," replied Richard firmly—almost sternly; "but what causes you to think so?"

"Your so decidely declining an introduction to General Trecarrel and his two daughters—the most beautiful girls in the duchy of Cornwall. They come of a good family too; and as the couplet has it:—

"'By Tre, Pol, and Pen,
Ye may know the Cornish men.'"

"The General resides somewhere near Porthellick, does he not?" asked Downie, who saw

that his brother was changing colour, or rather losing it fast.

"Some one told me, Dick, that it was rumoured you got into a scrape in Edinburgh, 'that village somewhere in the North,' as one of our humourists calls it; it was to the effect that your landlady had fallen over head and ears in love with her handsome lodger, who was ditto ditto in her debt, and had to soothe her ruffled feelings and settle her bill, by matrimony at sight."

"An utter scandal!" said Richard, now laughing. "Your allowance to me, ever since I left the Cornish Light Infantry, has been too generous for such a catastrophe ever to occur."

"And next came a story, that when you were at Montreal with the regiment, you made a precious mess of it with some pretty girl, and—to use Downie's phraseology—parted as heart-broken lovers, to figure as plaintiff and defendant at the bar."

"Worse still and as false, my lord!" exclaimed Richard, now pale with suppressed passion.

"Don't look so darkly, Richard," said Lord Lamorna, who saw the flash in his nephew's dark blue eyes; "I have had a pretty little box at Chertsey, and a villa at St. John's Wood in my day, when my friends, raven-tressed, or golden-haired as the case might be, were amiable and tenderly

attached—but deuced expensive; so I must not be severe upon you," added the old man, with his dry cackling laugh. "It is not these kind of little arrangements I fear, but a *mésalliance*; and there are scandals even in London—yes, even in the mighty world of London, though there they soon die; they don't live and take root, as in the so-called purer air of the country."

"I cannot understand all those vague hints, tales and rumours, or who sets them afloat," replied Richard, making an effort to preserve his calmness.

Downie saw the veins rise in his brother's forehead while their uncle had been speaking; and he smiled a quiet smile, as he bent curiously over his glass.

> "Full many a shaft at random sent,
> Finds mark the archer never meant;"

and he could see that some of the random remarks in the present conversation, rankled deeply in Richard's breast; and that this conversation had verged, more than once, on somewhat dangerous ground.

"Well, it is a marvel to me, Richard, how a handsome fellow like you can have escaped so long, known as you are to be the heir to my title and estates," continued the old lord, still harping on the same topic; "for the girls now go in for winning in

matrimony, as we used to do at Ascot and Epsom."

"How, my lord?" asked Downie, as if he had never heard the joke before.

"By a neck—a bare neck and bosom added; witness the beautiful and aristocratic demi-mondes at the Opera! Elizabeth was the first Englishwoman who, to excite admiration, exposed her person thus. The virgin queen wore a huge ruff certainly; but it stuck up *behind* her, she was *décolletée* enough in front."

"I prefer her Scottish rival—collared to her pretty neck, and sleeved to the slender wrist," said Richard Trevelyan; "by Jove, I should not have cared for flirting with a woman who carried a fan in one hand and a hatchet in the other."

"Our ancestor, Henry Lord Lamorna, was governor of Rougemont Castle, in Devonshire, under Queen Elizabeth," said the peer pompously; "but having married the daughter of a simple knight in Surrey, he lost Her Majesty's favour at Court, and had to live in retirement here at Rhoscadzhel. Let that mistake be a warning to you, Richard."

"It happened pretty long ago," replied Richard, laughing; "and at forty years of age I am surely unlikely to commit an act of folly——"

"If it be not committed already?"

—"And lose your favour, even by marrying, 'the daughter of a simple knight.'"

"With my favour you would lose this fine estate. But give me your hand, Dick, I know you will never do aught unworthy of our good old Cornish name of Trevelyan!"

With a grand old-fashioned air—yet one full of kindness—the proud old man presented his thin white hand to his nephew, who pressed it affectionately, and then rose to withdraw.

"Whither go you, Dick, so soon?"

"Oh—anywhere, uncle," replied the other, wearily.

"How, sir?"

"Merely into the lawn to enjoy a post-prandial cigar," replied Richard, whose face wore an evident expression of annoyance, as he bowed and quitted the room.

"We have worried him, I fear," said Downie, with a self-satisfied smile.

"Don't use slang—it is bad in tone," replied his uncle; "but I cannot make your brother out—I hope he is not deceiving us all. Gad, if I thought so—if that Montreal story should prove true——" the peer paused, and his keen blue eyes flashed with anger at the vague thoughts that occurred to him.

"Oh, do not fear, my lord," said Downie Tre-

velyan, in a suave and soothing manner; "though sham diamonds often do duty for real ones."

"What *do* you mean?" asked his uncle, haughtily.

Downie only smiled, and bent over his glass of Burgundy again.

"*Neb na gare y gwayn call restoua*," said Lord Lamorna, significantly; "I hate proverbs: but this is a good old Cornish one; "he that heeds not gain, must expect *loss*. When do you expect your oldest boy home from India?"

"He may arrive next week, pehaps, my lord, and he will at once dutifully hasten to present himself to you."

"He must be well up among the Lieutenants of the Hussars now?"

"Yet he means to exchange into the Infantry."

"Why?"

"It is a matter of expedience and expense, my lord; even with forage, batta, tentage, and so forth, he finds his regiment a very extravagant one."

"I shall give him a cheque on Coutts and Co., for I must not forget that you did me the honour to name him after *me*."

"But you did us the greater honour in being his sponsor—and in bestowing upon him a gold sponsorial mug."

"With the *Koithgath* of the Trevelyans for a handle, and another perched on the lid; well, well—

he may be my successor here—who knows, who knows," mumbled the old man, as he prepared to take his after dinner nap, by spreading a cambric handkerchief over his face, and Downie glided noiselessly away to the library, with a strange and unfathomable smile on his colourless face, and he muttered,—

"I too may say—"*the time will come!*"

## CHAPTER II.

### RHOSCADZHEL.

On the smooth lawn his brother was walking to and fro, with a cigar between his firm white teeth, with his heart a prey to bitter and exciting thoughts; and though Richard Trevelyan is not, as we have said, the hero of these pages, to the lawn we shall accompany him.

"What the deuce can be the secret spring of all this intrusive solicitude upon my uncle's part about having me married, as if I were a young girl in her third season?" he muttered; "I have often feared that Downie suspected me—as a lawyer, it is natural he should suspect every one of something more than he sees or knows; and yet—I have been so wary, so careful! My poor Constance—still concealment—still dissimulation for the present, and doubts of our future! No hope for us, save in the death of that old man, ever so good and kind to me. Did he really but know Constance, how sweet and gentle she is! A curse be on this silly pride of birth and fortuitous position which is our bane—

this boasting of pedigree old as the days of Bran ap Llyr, the ancestor of King Arthur. By Jove, it is too absurd!" and he laughed angrily as he tossed away his cigar and then sighed, as he surveyed the façade of the stately mansion, and cast his eyes round the spacious lawn that stretched far away in starlight and obscurity. "And yet must I stoop to this senile folly," he added, half aloud; "for 'twere hard to see all these broad acres go to Downie's boy, the Hussar, past me and mine!"

The seats of the Cornish aristocracy have usually little to boast of in architecture; but the mansion of Rhoscadzhel* was an exception, being a rare specimen of a fine old Tudor dwelling, which had suffered more from the rude hand of civil war, than from "time's effacing fingers," and was built, tradition avers, from the famous quarry of Pencarrow, and of good Cornish freestone.

A massive iron gate, between carved pillars, each surmounted by a koithgath, or wild cat, rampant—a crest of which Lord Lamorna was as vain as ever was old Bradwardine of his heraldic bears—gave access to the avenue, a long and leafy tunnel that lay between the house and the highway leading to the Land's End. The branches of the stately old elms were interlaced overhead, like the groined arches of a Gothic cathedral and a delightful pro-

* Cadzhel, Cornish for castle.

menade their shade afforded in the hot days of summer, when only a patch of blue sky, or the golden rays falling aslant, could be seen at times through their foliage.

Engrafted in the later Tudor times upon the ruins of Rhoscadzhel, of which there is still remaining the fragment of a loopholed tower and ponderous granite arch shrouded in ivy, with its modern *porte-cochère* and vestibule floored with marble, its mullioned windows filled in with plate glass in lieu of little lozenge-panes, its dining hall and drawing rooms lighted with gas when such was the wish of its proprietor, the mansion, though retaining all the characteristics of the days when Queen Bess held her court at Greenwich and danced before the Scottish ambassador, had nevertheless all the comforts, appliances and splendour, with which the taste and wealth of the present age could invest it.

The great dining-hall had remained almost unchanged since the days of the first Charles. Its vast chimney-piece, which rose nearly to the ceiling, was covered with marvellous scrolls and legends, and innumerable wild cats' heads among them, over all being the arms of Trevelyan of Lamorna; *gules*, a demi-horse *argent* issuing from the sea, adapted from the circumstance of one of the family swimming on horseback from the Seven Stones to the

Land's End, when they were suddenly separated from the continent by a terrible inundation of the ocean, and as this dangerous reef is no less than *nine* miles from Scilly, where a light-ship points it out to the mariner, the feat was well worthy of being recorded, at least in heraldry.

The furniture here was quaint and old, massive and richly carved, and though the vast stone-flagged chamber, where many a Cornish cavalier has whilom drunk "confusion to Cromwell and the Rump," and where still stands the great dining table with its daïs, where of old "the carles of low degree" had sat below the salt, is sombre and gloomy, somewhat of lightness is imparted by the splendid modern conservatory that opens off it, with marble floor and shelves of iron fret-work laden with rare and exotic plants.

It boasts of a chamber known as "the Queen's," wherein Henrietta Maria had slept one night before she fled to France, and since then no one has ever occupied the ancient bed that, like a huge catafalque, stands upon three steps in the centre of the wainscoted room which like several others in Rhoscadzhel, has hangings of faded green tapestry, that are lifted to give entrance; and where the hearths, intended for wood alone, have grotesque andirons in the form of the inevitable koithgath on its hind legs. And on the walls of these old chambers hung many a

trophy of the past, and many a weapon of the present day, from the great two-handed sword wielded by Henry Lord Lamorna at the Battle of Pinkey down to the yeomanry sabre worn by the present peer at the coronation of George IV., a peer of whose effeminacy the said Lord Henry would have been sorely ashamed.

And many a Vandyke, Kneller, and Lely were there, with portraits of the Trevelyans of past times, who now lay under their marble tombs in yonder little church upon the hill, where among dust and cobwebs hung their helmets, spurs, and gauntlets, and the iron mace of one Launcelot Trevelyan, who was a man of vast stature; and it is as great a source of wonder to the village children as the rickety ruin of a gilded coach which at certain times is drawn forth to the lawn and aired carefully, being that in which the grandfather of the present peer brought home his bride in patches and powder, and it is supposed to be the first vehicle of the kind ever seen in the duchy of Cornwall. Thus, as Richard Pencarrow Trevelyan thought over all these possessions with their traditional and family interests, of which, by one ill-natured stroke of the pen, his proud uncle might deprive him and his heirs for ever, a bitter sigh escaped him.

Beyond the quaint façade of the ancient house,

from the mullioned windows of which, half hidden by ivy and wild roses, there streamed out many a light into the darkness, his eyes wandered to the fertile fields, all bare stubble now, to the wide open moor overlooked by many a wooded *tor*, and to the beautiful lawn, in the centre of which stands one of those wonderful *logan-stones*, so peculiar to Cornwall and Brittany, a ponderous, spheroidal mass of granite, so exquisitely balanced that it may be oscillated by the touch even of a woman's hand; and as he turned away to indulge in deeper reverie by the shore of the adjacent sea, he raised his right hand and his glistening eyes to the stars, as if some vow, as yet unuttered, was quivering on his tongue.

"Yes?" he exclaimed, "please God and pray God, the time will come; but *not* as my good uncle, and not, as the careful Downie, anticipate. Marriage! how little do they know how, in the great lottery of life, my *kismet*—as we used to say in India—has been fixed—irrevocably fixed!"

## CHAPTER III.

### THE ALARM BELL.

The season was autumn now, and on the succeeding day—the last he meant to spend at Rhoscadzhel for some time at least—Richard Trevelyan appeared in the breakfast parlour again in shooting costume, with a scarlet shirt having an open collar, and with a brown leather shot-belt over his shoulder; while his uncle, who, even when at his slender morning repast, in his elaborately flowered dressing-gown, wore accurately fitting pale kid gloves on his shrivelled hands, for such things were a necessity of the old lord's existence; thus he glanced again with an air of annoyance at the dress worn by his eldest nephew, as he considered it a solecism, decidedly in bad taste, and that something more was due to his own presence.

Downie's costume, a fashionable morning coat came more near his lordship's ideas of propriety.

Mr. Jasper Funnel, in accurate black, was at the side-table, to slice down the cold meat, pour out the coffee from its silver urn into the beautiful Wedge-

wood cups, and to carve the grouse and other pies; for Cornwall is peculiarly the land of that species of viand, as there the denizens make pies of everything eatable, squab-pies, pilchard-pies, muggetty-pies, and so forth.

"I heard last evening the new chime of bells you have put up in Lamorna Church," said Richard, as he seated himself and attacked a plate of grouse, the recent spoil of his own gun; "how pleasantly they sound. Who rings them?"

"I cannot say—never inquired," replied the old peer, testily; "I can only tell you one thing, Richard."

"And that is——"

"They were *wrung* out of my pocket by the vestry."

At this little quip, Downie obsequiously and applaudingly laughed as loudly as he was ever known to do, and just as if he had never heard it before.

"However, I need not grudge the poor people their chime of bells; I am rich enough to afford them more than that, and occupying as we do a good slice of this *Land of Tin*, for so the Phœnicians named this Cornish peninsula of ours as early as the days of Solomon, we have its credit to maintain; but bring us home a well-born and handsome bird, Dick, and I shall have the bells rung till they fly to pieces—by Jove I will! Only, as I hinted last

night, let her be worthy to represent those who lie under their marble tombs in that old church of Lamorna; for there are bones there that would shrink in their leaden coffins if aught plebeian were laid beside them."

Richard shrugged his shoulders, and glanced round him with impatience.

"Let us look forward, my dear uncle," said he; "in this age of progress all men do; and of what account or avail can a dead ancestry be?"

Downie smiled faintly, and Lord Lamorna frowned in the act of decapitating an egg, for to his ears this sounded as rank heresy or treason against the state.

"By heavens! nephew Richard, you talk like a Red Republican. With these socialistic views of equality, and so forth, I fear you will never shine in the Upper House."

"I have no desire to do so; you see how simple my tastes are——"

"In dress decidedly too much so."

"And how happy and content I am to lead the life of a quiet country gentleman; and have done so ever since I left the Cornish Light Infantry."

"Your demands upon my pocket are certainly so moderate, that I cannot think you are playing me false, Dick," said the peer, with a pleasant smile; "egad, if I thought you were doing so, I'd have you

before the Mayor of Halgaver, as our Cornish folks say!"

"Trust me, my good uncle," replied Richard Trevelyan, with a glistening eye, and laying a hand caressingly on the old man's shoulder, as he rose and adjusted his shot-belt; "and now I go to have a farewell shot on the moors."

"Why a farewell shot? you have been here barely a fortnight."

"Nevertheless, I must leave Rhoscadzhel to-morrow."

"Positively?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Pardon me," continued Lamorna, drily; "but may we inquire for where?"

"Oxford—and then town after, perhaps."

"Oxford—and town too," replied his uncle, testily; "the last time you left this for London, if General Trecarrel was right, you were seen for a month after in his neighbourhood; and, if his story were true—and I dare not doubt it—you did not get beyond the border of Cornwall—and were certainly not so far as Devonshire."

"Trecarrel was, I hope, mistaken," urged Richard.

"I hope so, too."

Richard's face was pale, and to conceal his emotion, he stooped and caressed his favourite pointer, which had bounded in when the butler opened the door;

and soon recovering from his little agitation—whatever its secret source might be—he politely and affectionately bade his uncle "good-bye for the present," nodded to the silent and observant Downie, took a double-barrelled breech-loader from the gun-room and sallied forth, unattended by gamekeepers, desiring quite as much to indulge in reverie and enjoy a solitary ramble, as to have a shot at a passing bird.

To Richard it seemed that he had read a strangely keen, weird and unfathomable expression in his uncle's eyes, as they followed his departing steps on this particular morning—an expression which, somehow, haunted him.

The season, we have said, was now autumn, and a tender, mellow tone rested over all the landscape; Richard Trevelyan was fond of the strange, wild district—the land of old tradition, of bold and varied scenery—amid which his youth and so much of his manhood had been passed, and he looked around him from time to time with admiring eyes and an enthusiastic heart.

A soft warm shower had fallen that morning early, refreshing the fading September leaves in the belts of coppice that girt the upland slopes, and in the orchards, where the ripe golden apples were dropping amid the thick sward below. Above the purple, and often desolate moors which are so

characteristic of Cornish scenery, and where the small breed of horses, the little black cattle and sharp-nosed sheep of the province were grazing, the wooded *tors* or hills stood boldly up in the distance, their foliage in most instances presenting many varied tints. There were the brown madder, the crisped chesnut, and the fading beech, the more faded green of the old Cornish elm, and the russet fern below, from amid which at every step he took the birds whirred up in coveys; while Richard, lost in reverie—the result of his uncle's remarks of late—never emptied a barrel at them, but walked slowly on looking round him from time to time, and filled with thoughts that were all his own as yet.

The place where he loitered was very lonely: here and there a gray lichen-spotted druidical monolith stood grimly up amid the silent waste; in the distance might be seen the gray expanse of the ocean, or some bleak looking houses slated with blue, as they usually are in Devon and Cornwall, or perhaps some of those poorer huts, which, like wigwams, have cob-walls; *i.e.* are built of earth, mud, and straw, beaten and pounded together, just as they might have been in the days of Bran the son of Llyr, or when Arthur dwelt in Tintagel.

Richard Trevelyan threw himself upon a grassy bank, and his pointer, doubtless surprised by his neglect of all sport, lay beside him with eyes of

wonder and tongue out-lolled. In the distance, about a mile or so away, Trevelyan could see Rhoscadzhel House shining in the morning sunlight; and again, as on the preceding evening, he looked around with a bitter smile upon tor and moorland, and on the wondrous druid monoliths that stand up here and there on the bleak hill sides, each and all of them having their own quaint name and grim old legend.

How came each to be there? "Without patent rollers; nay, without the simplest mechanical contrivances of modern times, how was so huge a mass transported to yonder desolate and wind-swept height? How many yoke of oxen, how many straining scores of men must it have taken to erect the least of them! What submission to authority, what servile or superstitious fear must have animated the workers! No drover's whip would have urged to such a task; no richest guerdon could have repaid the toil; yet there the wonder stands!"

And some such thoughts as these floated through the mind of Richard, as his eyes wandered from a cromlech or slab that rested on three great stones, to a vast *maen* or rock-pillar, that might be coeval with the days when Jacob set up such a stone to witness his covenant with Laban.

"Shall I ever wander here with Constance—and if so, *when*," thought he; "assuredly not while my

uncle lives; but his death—how can I contemplate it, when he is so good, so kind, so tender, and so true to me? Oh, let me not anticipate *that*."

How often in autumn, in the gloomy mornings of November, had he pursued the fox over these desolate moors, often breakfasting by candle-light in his red coat on a hunting morning, to the great boredom of old Jasper Funnel?

What joy it would be to gallop over that breezy wind-swept moor, with Constance by his side! To walk with her through yonder dense old thicket, and tell her that every tree and twig therein were her own; to drive by yonder cliff, Tol Pedn Penwith, the western boundary of a beautiful bay, and where in the summer evening, the forty Isles of Scilly seemed to be cradled in the glory of the western sun; to show her all these places with which he was so familiar, and perhaps to tell their children in the years to come—for all Richard's habits and tastes were alike gentle and domestic—the old Cornish legends of Arthur's castle at Tintagel, of the magic well of St. Keyne, and of Tregeagle the giant—the bugbear of all Cornish little people; the melancholy monster or fiend, who according to traditions still believed in, haunts the Dozmare Pool, from whence he hurled the vast granite blocks, known as his "quoits," upon the coast westward of Penzance Head; the deep dark

Pool, his dwelling place, is said to be unfathomable and the resort of other evil spirits.

Desolate and begirt by arid and dreary hills, it presents an aspect of gloomy horror; and then when the winter storms sweep the moorland wastes, and the miners at the Land's End, deep, deep down in mines below the sea, hear the enormous boulders dashed by it on the flinty shore overhead, above all can be heard the howling of Tregeagle! For ages he has been condemned to the task of emptying the Dozmare Pool by a tiny limpet-shell, and his cries are uttered in despair of the hopelessness of the drudgery assigned him by the devil, who in moments of impatience, hunts him round the tarn, till he flies to the Roche Rocks fifteen miles distant, and finds respite by placing his hideous head through the painted window of a ruined chapel, as a bumpkin might through a horse-collar; for these, and a thousand such stories as these, are believed in Cornwall, nor can even the whistle of the railway from Plymouth to Penzance scare them away.

Richard Trevelyan was smiling when he remembered how often he and Downie, when loving little brothers and playfellows, had been scared in their cribs at night by stories of Tregeagle; and of that other mighty giant who lies buried beneath Carn Brea, where his clenched skeleton hand, now converted into a block of granite (having five dis-

tinct parts, like a thumb and fingers) protrudes through the turf.

He could recal the dark hours, when as fair-haired children, they had cowered together in one of the tapestried rooms of Rhoscadzhel, and clasped each other's hands and necks in fear of those hob-goblins, which people the very rock and cavern, and even the very air of Cornwall. Downie was a man now, legal in bearing, and cold-blooded in heart. Richard had painful doubts of him, and remembered, that, strangely enough his hand *alone*, had always failed to rock the logan-stone in the lawn before Rhoscadzhel, and such monuments of antiquity, have, according to Mason, the properties of an ordeal —the test of truth and probity :

> " Behold yon huge
> And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
> Which, poised by magic, rests its central weight
> On yonder pointed rock : firm as it seems,
> Such is its strange and virtuous property,
> It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
> Of him whose heart is pure ; but to *a traitor*,
> Tho' e'en a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
> It stands as fixed as Snowdon ! "

Even the childish hands of his little daughter Gartha, could rock the logan-stone, when Downie's failed to do so. Why was this? Was there indeed any truth in the ancient test of integrity and purity

of heart; or was it but an engine of religious imposition? And now amid these unpleasant speculations, there came to the loiterer's ear, the tolling of a distant bell.

He started up, and listened.

It was, beyond a doubt, the house-bell of Rhoscadzhel, and was being rung violently and continuously, for the breeze brought the notes distinctly over the furzy waste.

What could have happened? Fire—or was he wanted in haste? Was his uncle indisposed; were his fears, his hopes and wishes, though blended with sorrow, to be realised at last?

His breath came thick and painfully, and he remembered with something of foreboding—for his Cornish breeding rendered him superstitious and impressionable—that as he had passed Lamorna church that morning, he had seen, on the rough *lichstones* at the entrance to the sequestered churchyard, a coffin rested prior to interment, while the soft sad psalmody of those who had borne it thither —a band of hardy miners—floated through the still and ambient air; for the custom of bearing the dead to their last resting place with holy songs—a usage in the East, as old as the fourth century—is still observed in Cornwall, that land of quaint traditions and picturesque old memories.

Springing to his feet, Richard Trevelyan dis-

charged both barrels of his gun into the air, and hurried in the direction of the manor house.

As he drew nearer, the sonorous clangour of the great bell, which was now rung at intervals, but with great vigour, continued to increase, adding to the surprise and tumult of his heart, and the perturbation of his spirit.

## CHAPTER IV.

### POWDERED WITH TEARS.

A MOUNTED footman, who approached him at full speed, pulled up for a moment and respectfully touched his hat, for he was one of the Lamorna household.

"What is the matter?" asked Richard.

"Oh, sir—oh, Mr. Richard—my lord is taken very ill."

"Ill—my uncle?"

"He is quite senseless, and Mr. Downie Trevelyan has sent me for the doctor."

"Then ride on and lose no time," replied Richard, as he hastened to the house, where he found confusion and dismay predominant, the servants hovering in the vestibule, conversing in whispers and listening at the library door, while Jasper Funnel and Mrs. Duntreath, the old housekeeper (a lineal descendant of the Dolly Duntreath, so well-known in Cornwall), were mingling their sighs and regrets for the loss of so good a master.

"Where is my uncle?" asked Richard, impetuously.

"In the lib—lib—library," sobbed the housekeeper, with her black silk apron at her eyes, and as Richard advanced, Jasper Funnel softly opened the door. The favourite nephew entered the long spacious and splendid apartment, which occupied nearly the entire length of one of the wings of Rhoscadzhel, its shelves of dark wainscot filled by books in rare and magnificent bindings, with white marble busts of the great and learned men of classical antiquity looking calmly down on what was passing below.

The fire-place was deep and old; but a seacoal fire was burning cheerily in the bright steel modern grate; and as if he was in a dream, seeing the far stretching lawn, with its tufts of waving fern and stately lines of elm and oak, as he passed the tall windows noiselessly on the soft Turkey carpet, Richard drew hastily near the great arm-chair, in which his uncle was seated, dead—stone-dead, with Downie, somewhat pale and disordered in aspect, bending over him!

The old man had suddenly passed away—disease of the heart, as it proved eventually, had assailed him while seated at his writing-table.

On Richard's entrance and approach, Downie hurriedly took from the table and thrust into his pocket, a document which looked most legally and suspiciously like a "last will and testament;" but

quick though the action, Richard could perceive that the document, whatever it was, had no signatures of any kind.

Richard knelt by his uncle's side; he felt his pulses; they had ceased to beat; his heart was cold and still, and there came no sign of breath upon the polished surface of the mirror he held before the fallen jaw; with something of remorse Richard thought,—

"No later than this morning I deceived him—and he loved me so—was ever my friend and second father!—I thought," he added aloud, to Downie, "that his eyes wore an unusual expression this morning—a weird, keen, farseeing kind of look, such as I never read in them before."

"I fancied that I perceived some such expression myself, and consequently, at his years, was the less alarmed, or shall I say shocked, when in the very act of speaking to me, a sudden spasm came over his features—a deep sigh, almost a faint cry escaped him, and he sank back in his chair, when just about to write. See, there is the pen on the floor, exactly where it fell from his relaxed fingers."

Richard's honest eyes were filled with tears, and mechanically he picked up the pen and laid it on the desk.

"Writing, say you, Downie; and what was he writing?"

"Oh, I cannot say—a letter to his steward, I believe."

"But—I see no letter.'

"He was just about to commence it," replied Downie, whose usually pale face coloured a little.

"And that paper you pocketed in such haste, Downie, what was it?"

"Nothing, Richard, that can concern you (by-the-by, you are Lord Lamorna now!) or that fair one whose portrait you exhibit so ostentatiously just now."

"Richard started, alike at the title so suddenly accorded to him by his brother, and at the reference to the portrait, for in the confusion or haste, as he bent over his dead uncle, a little miniature, which he wore at a ribbon round his neck, depicting a very beautiful dark-eyed woman, had slipped from his vest, and with an exclamation of annoyance, he hastened to conceal it.

"*Who* is the lady, Richard?" asked Downie.

"As yet, that must remain my secret," replied Richard; "a little time, my dear fellow, and we shall have no mysteries among us."

Downie, secretly, was not ill-pleased by this diversion, in which Richard forgot the subject of the paper.

The doctor soon came—a village practitioner—fussy and full of importance; but nevertheless

skilful; and he decided that disease of the heart—a malady under which, though ignorant of its existence, the deceased had long laboured—had proved the immediate cause of death. The poor shrivelled remains of the proud old lord were conveyed to the principal bed-room of the mansion, and there laid in a species of state, upon a four-posted bed, that rose from a dais, and was all draped with black. His coronet and Order of the Bath, together with that of St. Anne, which he received when ambassador in Russia, were deposited at his feet upon a crimson velvet cushion, that was tasseled with gold; while two tall footmen in complete livery with long canes draped with crape, mounted guard beside the coffin day and night, to their own great disgust and annoyance, till the time of the funeral, of which Richard took the entire charge; and which, in a spirit of affection and good taste, he resolved should be in all respects exactly what the deceased peer would have wished it to be.

The features of the latter became, for a time, young and beautiful in their manliness and perfect regularity, while all the lines engraven there by Time were smoothed out, if not completely effaced.

"How like our father, as I can remember him, he looks!" whispered Downie, more softened than usual, by the hallowing presence of death.

But Richard was thinking of another face whom

the dead man resembled—a young and beloved face to him.

"Denzil did you say?" he stammered.

"I said our father," replied Downie, sharply.

"True, he died young," was the confused reply.

"Your mind wanders, surely?" said Downie, with a dark and inexplicable expression in his now averted face; but Richard saw it not, he was simply taking a farewell glance of one who had loved him so well; his manly heart was soft, and his dark-blue eyes were full with the tears of honest affection and gratitude.

So Audley Lord Lamorna was dead, and all now turned to Richard as their new and future master; all the blinds in Rhoscadzhel were drawn down by order of Mrs. Duntreath, and all went about on tip-toe or spoke in subdued voices, especially Downie, who in his heart thought that Richard was spending "far too much in ostrich feathers, crimson coffins, and other mummery," among undertakers, and heraldic painters, too; but he was more politic than to say so—even to his wife, who, with her daughter Gartha, a pretty girl in her teens, had been on a visit to General Trecarrel, and now duly arrived to act as mistress of the mansion, *pro tem.*, during the solemnities of which it was to be the scene.

She was warmly welcomed by Richard Trevelyan;

she was his only brother's wife, and he had none of his own to take her place there—as yet.

A peevish and foolish woman of fashion, who had once possessed undoubted beauty, Mrs. Downie Trevelyan was generally treated as a kind of cypher now by her husband; but nevertheless he consulted her at times, on certain matters of common interest. She still clung tenaciously to the tradition of her former beauty, and sought to retain it by the aid of pearl powder, the faintest indication of rouge perhaps, and by the prettiest of matronly head-dresses made of the costliest lace. She was always languid, somewhat dreary, and spent most of her time with a novel in one hand, and a magnificent little bottle of ether, or some strong perfume, in the other. To Richard her society was decidedly a bore; but at this crisis he was full of business, and occupied by a depth of thought that was apparent to all.

Six tall servants in mourning scarfs, and in the livery of the Trevelyans, bore upon their shoulders the crimson velvet coffin containing the remains of the late lord, to the vault where his forefathers lay, and where many of them had been interred by torchlight, in times long past.

There was something feudal, stately, and solemn in the aspect of the procession, when between two lines of all the tenantry, standing bare-headed, it

wound down the old avenue, where the leaves were almost as thick, the sun as bright, and the birds singing as merrily as they might have been when Lord Launcelot rode there by the Queen's bridle, or when he and his cavaliers fled from Fairfax to seek shelter in Trewoofe; and so his descendant Audley was laid at last, where so many of his predecessors lie side by side, "ranged in mournful order and in a kind of silent pomp," each coffin bearing the names, titles and arms of its mouldering occupant.

Pondering on *who* might stand here when his turn came to be lowered down there, Richard, the new lord, stood at the head of the tomb, pale, and with more emotion than met the eye; Downie stood on his right hand, and the heir of the latter, well bronzed by the sun of India, on his left, three of his younger brothers, held with a ribbon. Their old friend, General Trecarrel, stood grimly and erect at the foot. The vault was closed, and the body of Audley, tenth Lord Lamorna, that frail tenement, which he had petted and pampered, of which he had been so careful and so vain, for some seventy years, was left to the worms at last!

The assemblage dispersed, and the world went on as usual.

The bell of the village church, which had all morning tolled minute strokes, ceased; and after a

time the new chimes rang out a merry peal in honour of his successor. It was in Cornwall as at St. Cloud; *le Roi est mort—vive le Roi!*

The old general, who had no fancy for a mansion of gloom, departed, and took back with him Downie's son Audley, a jolly young subaltern, whom we shall soon meet elsewhere.

But prior to this departure, there had been the reading of the will, an affair of great solemnity, in the library, the same apartment where the late lord died; and his solicitors, Messrs. Gorbelly and Culverhole, a fat and a lean pair of lawyers, felt all their vulgar importance on the occasion.

There were a few handsome presents to old and faithful servants, including Jasper Funnel and Mrs. Duntreath (whose sobs became somewhat intrusive), and Richard found himself Lord of Rhoscadzhel and Lamorna, with an unfettered fortune of thirty thousand per annum; while Downie had a bequest of less than the third of that sum, together with some jewelry, including the Russian diamond ring for his wife and daughter Gartha.

So whatever had been the object or the tenor of that document which the astute barrister had so evidently prepared, and which he had thrust into his pocket so hastily and awkwardly on that eventful morning, Richard was as safely installed in the estates as in his hereditary title; and the moment

he found himself alone, he became immersed in letter-writing.

Opening the crimson morocco blotting pad which his uncle had last used, and which had his coronet and crest, the wild-cat, stamped in gold thereon, he saw some words written in his brother's hand, and these, on investigation proved to be, "This is the last will and testament of me, L——" (doubtless Lord Lamorna); further on, as if at the bottom of the page, he could detect the name of "Porthellick," and a dark flush of passion crimsoned the face of Richard. He thought again of the document he had seen in Downie's hand; their uncle could certainly never have signed it, but some painful doubts—added to intense sorrow for their existence—grew strong in Richard's heart, which was a true and generous one.

"My dear Constance—my long suffering darling!" he muttered, almost aloud; "the day is now near when all your doubts and my dissimulation to the world shall end. Thank God, the time has almost come."

And he rode forth, to post with his own hand a letter he had written.

He was barely gone ere Downie, who had been quietly observing his motions, also made an investigation of the blotting pad which Richard had just closed, and therein he saw what seemed to be the address of a recent letter. He held the pink sheet

between his eyes and the light, and read clearly enough, "Mrs. Devereaux, Porthellick Cottage."

And the lawyer smiled sourly, but with great uneasiness, nevertheless, and he muttered aloud,

"I had but vague suspicions before—and now all my knowledge has come too late—too late!"

"I am so sorry to hear you say so, dear," said his graceful little wife, the rustle of whose fashionable mourning suit he had been too much preoccupied to hear, as she glided into the library, in search of one of the many uncut novels that now littered the tables; "sorry chiefly for the sake of our dear Audley, and Gartha, and the other little ones."

"Your know to what I refer—the succession; it may not be so hopeless or irreparable as we think."

"But your uncle died with his will unchanged."

"True; I pressed upon him lately my belief that Richard had formed that—of which he had a horror so great—a *mésalliance*—in fact, a low or improper attachment for one beneath us in rank and name. My uncle's fury became great, and to take advantage of the time, I placed before him a will, leaving all his estates, as he had a hundred times threatened to do, to me and mine. I had the document ready written, and placed it before him; but as fate would have it, in his pride, fury, and resentment, a

spasm seized the old man, and he fell back dying, actually with the pen in his hand, after I had dipped it in that silver inkstand and placed it between his fingers."

"How extremely unfortunate!" said Mrs. Downie Trevelyan, placing her scent-bottle languidly to her little pink nostrils.

"Unfortunate? It was a narrow chance by which to lose thirty thousand a year!" said Downie, grinding his teeth, while his eyes gleamed like two bits of grey glass in moonlight. "There is some mystery about Richard's life; moreover, he wears a woman's miniature at his neck."

"Young—is she?"

"Well—yes—she seems so."

"And pretty?" added Mrs. Downie, glancing at herself in a mirror.

"Very."

"His intended, perhaps?"

"I hope she is not more than that; but time must soon show now."

And over the porte-cochere of Rhoscadzhel there now hung a vast lozenge-shaped hatchment or funeral escutcheon, the sight of which would have delighted him, whose memory it was meant to honour, being the achievement of a bachelor peer, representing the arms of Lamorna in a shield complete—the demi-horse *argent* of the Trevelyans

rising from the sea; over all, the baron's coronet, crest, motto, and mantling, collared by the Orders of the Bath and St. Anne; and after some old fashion, retained still only in Germany, Scotland, and France, the herald-painter had depicted at each corner a death-head, while all the black interstices were *powdered with tears.*

## CHAPTER V.

### PORTHELLICK VILLA.

More than forty miles distant from Rhoscadzhel, on that part of the Cornish coast which is washed by the waves of the Bristol Channel, at a place named Porthellick, or the Cove of Willows, was a beautiful white-walled villa, built in the Greek style of architecture, with an Ionic portico of six carved and painted wooden pillars. Its windows opened in the French fashion, and descended to the floor; luxuriant creepers, jasmines, and sweet brier, were trained on green trellis-work around it, and rare plants of gorgeous colours grew in stone vases, which were placed in a double row along the smooth gravelled terrace, from which the basement of the cottage rose—for the villa was a cottage in character, being but a one storeyed dwelling, though spacious and handsome, and having a noble conservatory and coach-house and stabling, and an approach of half a mile in length, bordered by a double line of those magnificent willows from which the place took its name, and affording,

from the principal windows in front, an ample view of the sea, with ever and anon, a white sail lingering in the dim blue distance, or a passing steamer, with its pennant of smoke, streaming astern, as it sped towards Ireland or the Isle of Man.

On the evening of that day when Lord Lamorna died so suddenly, a lady was standing under the portico of this house, looking anxiously, not seaward, but inland, towards the willow avenue, by which her residence was approached from the road that leads by Stratton, among the hills, towards Camelford and Wadebridge, near the rocky valley of Hanter-Gantick.

The lady looked repeatedly at her watch, consulted a railway time-table, and entered the house, only to return to her post, and bend her eyes in anxious gaze along the avenue.

Mrs. Devereaux, for it was she, was young-looking —marvellously so for her years: she seemed to be quite a girl still; yet she was [illegible]-and-thirty, and the mother of two children. This youthful appearance doubtless arose from her very petite and slender figure; her strictly fashionable style of dress, and the piquante beauty that shone in the minute features of her charming little face. Her eyes were dark, yet full of light and sparkle, though their long lashes imparted a great softness

of expression. Her eyebrows were very dark and well-defined—some might have deemed them too much so; but they imparted great character to her face. Her mouth and chin were perfect; her teeth like those of a child; and over all, her face, figure, and bearing, even to every motion of her hands and feet, Mrs. Devereaux was exquisitely lady-like.

"At last—at last they come!" she exclaimed; "and yonder is my dear, dear Denzil, whom I have not seen for so many, many months," she added, as her eyes filled with tears, and her soft cheek flushed with all a mother's joy.

As she uttered her thoughts aloud, a little basket-phaeton, drawn by two lovely cream-coloured Shetland ponies, was seen bowling down the avenue of pale green willows; a young lady was handling the ribbons of these Lilliputian steeds in a very masterly style; and beside her sat a young man, attired in fashionable travelling costume, who was alternately waving his cap and a newspaper, which he flourished so vigorously, that the sleek, brindled cattle grazing in the clover meadows close by, lifted their great brown eyes as if inquiringly, while the little drag, with its varnished wheels flashing, dashed along towards the villa, the walls of which shone white as snow in the evening sunlight.

The phaeton was reined up before the portico,

when a handsome lad of eighteen, with fine regular features, dark blue—almost black—eyes, and short fair curly hair, sprang out, and was instantly clasped to his mother's breast.

"Oh, mamma—we have such news for you!" exclaimed the young lady, who seemed an exact reproduction of Mrs. Devereaux in height and face, though barely seventeen, with dark eyes and hair; "oh, such news!" she added, in high, girlish excitement, as she tossed her whip and reins to a groom who came promptly from the stable-yard, Derrick Braddon, once a soldier in Richard's regiment—

"Surely mamma knows all," said the youth; "have you not seen the *Gazette?*"

"*Gazette?*" repeated Mrs. Devereaux, growing very pale, as she led her son caressingly into the little morning-room, where a hasty repast had been prepared for him and his sister, and which opened off a handsome little vestibule, hung with fox-brushes crossed, the trophies of many a hunting day, brought home by his father, "Captain Devereaux."

"Denzil is now an officer, mamma," said the young girl, throwing off her hat and looking admiringly at her brother; "I was just in time to meet him at the train."

"Yes, mamma—I was yesterday gazetted to an

ensigncy in the Cornish Light Infantry,—got leave from Sandhurst, and at once came right slick down here. Oh, how proud papa will be—is he not here?"

"No," replied Mrs. Devereaux, faintly; "and how does your name appear in the *Gazette?*"

"Here it is, mamma, dear," replied the youth, pointing to the paper he had been flourishing, and feeling proud to see his name, for the first time, in print. "'Cornish Light Infantry; Lieutenant Audley Trevelyan, from the 14th Hussars, to be lieutenant, vice Gascoigne, killed in action. Denzil Devereaux, gentleman cadet, from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, to be ensign, vice Foster, deceased.' And now, mamma, I am done at last with all the boredom of Euclid and fortification, Trigonometry, and all the rest of it."

"And you will soon be done with poor mamma, too!"

"Nay, mamma, dear; that can never, never be!" replied the lad, as he threw his arms round her neck and kissed away the tears that were already oozing from her long and beautiful eyelashes; "but I do so wish papa were at home—I have so much to tell, and so much to ask him!"

"Denzil—Devereaux?" said the mother, ponderingly, and as if to herself.

"Yes, mamma; and few fellows at Sandhurst had

more marks opposite their names than Denzil Devereaux, for I worked hard that I might choose my own regiment; so I chose the 32nd because I am a kind of Cornish man, and because it was papa's old corps. Oh, how pleased he will be!"

"And where is the regiment stationed now?" asked Mrs. Devereaux, in a low voice.

"In India."

"India?" she repeated, mechanically, as if that separation, which is but as a living death, had already begun.

"I wonder who the Audley Trevelyan figuring along with me in the *Gazette*, may be. It is a pure Cornish name."

His mother was weeping now, and Sybil, who had hitherto been silent, began to do so from sympathy; for already, so we have said, the pang of the coming parting was felt, and the maternal heart was wrung at the thought of a long and doubtful separation from her only son—her Denzil—whom she deemed beautiful as Apollo, and clever as the admirable Crichton; for the Overland Route had not been opened, there was no electric cable to India, and its nearest point was distant a six months' journey by sea round the Cape; and so, full of aching thoughts that her children could not share—thoughts that must be all her own till her husband returned—poor Mrs. Devereaux could only fold her son to her breast and

weep, till the young man's military and boyish enthusiasm became dulled, and his naturally warm and affectionate heart grew full with a perplexity that was akin to remorse, for seeking to leave her side and push his way in the world as a soldier. Yet that was the only career his father had ever indicated to him.

"A letter from papa—our dear papa!" exclaimed Sybil, glad to cause some diversion from the gathering gloom, as she caught the missive from the hand of the village postman, who appeared outside the open window.

"I wonder if he has heard of my appointment," surmised Denzil, his thoughts reverting to their old channel.

"It is sealed and edged with black!" exclaimed Sybil; "and—how singular—it bears the Penzance postmark!"

"How is this, mamma—I thought papa was in London?" asked Denzil.

Mrs. Devereaux trembled violently, as she tore open the letter, and muttering an excuse hastily left the room with it.

"What's up," said the ex-cadet, as he applied himself to the sherry decanter; "by Jove, Sybil, this is a strange way of receiving papa's letter. Who is dead, I wonder—I hope there is nothing wrong with him, anyway!"

"Oh, can he have met with an accident?"

"Scarcely, as the letter is written by himself; but to be at Penzance when we all thought he was in town—very odd, isn't it?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### RICHARD'S MYSTERY.

To explain much that the reader may have begun to suspect or misjudge, we must now go back a few years, into the private life of Richard Trevelyan.

When stationed with his regiment in Montreal he had made, at some public assembly, the acquaintance of Constance Devereaux, then a girl fresh from school. He was fascinated by her rare beauty, and a certain *espièglerie* of manner, which the thoughts and cares of future years eventually crushed out of her; and she, on her part, was dazzled by the attentions of a handsome and wealthy young officer; for Richard being his uncle's favourite nephew and heir, received from him a handsome yearly allowance, in addition to that which he inherited from his father.

Unfortunately Constance Devereaux, with all her beauty and accomplishments, was the daughter of one who would have been deemed of very humble caste indeed, if judged by the standard applied to such matters at Rhoscadzhel. The girl loved him

passionately and blindly, and little foreseeing all such a step would cost her in the end, she consented to a private marriage; so they were united in secret by Père Latour, the catholic curé of the chapel of St. Mary, near Montreal; an acolyte of the chapel and Richard's servant, a soldier named Derrick Braddon, being the only witnesses.

The marriage was duly registered in the books of the little church, and an attested copy was lodged with the curé who performed the ceremony; but as the regiment was ordered soon after to another colony, it was left in his hands for the time.

Richard obtained leave of absence, and soon after, much to his uncle's surprise, left the army by selling out, and led a kind of wandering life on the Continent, taking his wife's name of Devereaux, the better to conceal from the proud, and as yet unsuspecting old lord, the *mésalliance* he had formed—a union, however, of which he had never cause to repent, for his wife was gentle and tender, and possessed many brilliant mental qualities; but well did Richard know that if that union were discovered, the immense fortune, which was at Lord Lamorna's entire disposal, would be left, if not altogether to Downie, to others, and past himself and the heirs of his line; and that such a calamity should *not* occur he became more anxious and more solicitous after the birth of two children, a son whom he named

Denzil, after his own father, and a daughter, Sybil, born to them since their wanderings in Italy.

Many difficulties attended the course of this secret matrimonial life! Even in their continental travels, when seeking the most secluded places, stray English tourists would come suddenly upon them if they ventured near a table d'hôte; once or twice an old brother officer, or other people who knew or recognised in the so-called Captain Devereaux, Richard Trevelyan; and then mysterious nods or knowing smiles were exchanged, and odd whispers went abroad in the clubs of London and elsewhere —innuendoes that would have withered up the heart of Constance had she heard them.

She knew all that *might* be suspected, and felt that the positions of herself and her children, were alike false and liable to misconstruction; that malignant scandal might be busy with the names of them all. But the die was cast now, and she had but to suffer and endure; to pray and to wait the death of the poor old man who was so kind to her husband, and who loved him so well—yet not well enough to forgive—had he ever discovered it—the deception which had been practised upon him and upon society.

Repining in secret, sorrowing for the falsehood of her position, knowing that her husband, the father of her children, passed in the world as an eligible

bachelor, the object of many a designing mother, open to the attentions, the coquetries and captivations of their daughters, aware that he resided with her only by stealth and under another name than his own, Constance had indeed much to endure, though rewarded in some degree therefor, to see her children growing up in health and beauty, each a reproduction of their parents, for Denzil had all the personal attributes of his father, with much higher mental qualities, while the soft-eyed Sybil possessed all the dark beauty, the *petite* figure and lady-like grace of Constance herself.

The latter, we have said, was but the daughter of a Canadian trader; yet amid all the ease and luxury with which her husband's ample means and tender love supplied her, there were times, when she could not but murmur in her heart at the anomaly of her situation, so different from the honest security of her father's humble home, and her native pride revolted against it; and with this pride there grew a species of shame, which she felt to be totally unmerited, and then she felt an utter loathing for the very name of Lord Lamorna, (though it should one day be borne by her own husband) as being the cause of all her secret suffering, her dread of the present and doubt of the future.

On the education of their children, Richard, who doted on them, had spared nothing. Both were

highly accomplished, and wherever they had wandered they had the most talented masters that wealth could procure. Now Denzil had taken the highest prizes at Sandhurst and was gazetted to a Regiment of the Line, and was going forth into the world under the false name of Devereaux!

How was this to be altered—how explained and rectified?

A necessity for being much about Rhoscadzhel, as being the heir to the estates and as his uncle's years increased, had compelled Richard Trevelyan to be more often present in his native county than he had hitherto been; hence, he had settled his secret ties in the pretty little villa of Porthellick, at what he conceived to be a safe distance of some forty miles or so from the residence of Lord Lamorna.

In and about that villa he was simply known as "Captain Devereaux," and as he had almost entirely relinquished hunting and field sports—save an occasional shot at a bird—and when there lived a retired and secluded life; and as his wife and children seemed to live for themselves and him only, making friends with few save the poor and ailing, time glided by, and the mystery of Richard's career was never fully laid bare.

For those there are in this world (and his uncle was one) who would have pardoned Richard making

Constance Devereaux his mistress, and yet would mockingly have resented his making her a wedded wife!

Lamorna's friend General Trecarrel—the representative of one of the oldest families in Cornwall—who lived near Porthellick, had met Richard on horseback more than once in the vicinity of that place, when he was supposed to be in London, Paris, or elsewhere, and the mention of these circumstances caused Mr. Downie Trevelyan, who, as we have shown, had a keen personal interest in the matter, to prosecute certain inquiries in that part of the duchy, and the result led him to believe that the Captain Devereaux who occasionally resided at the Grecian Villa in the Willow Cove, and his irreproachable brother Richard, were one and the same person!

If it were so, the character of the lady must be—he supposed—somewhat questionable; and Downie knew right well that their uncle might forgive 'a *liaison*,' but never a marriage with one of an inferior grade. The conduct and bearing of the lady at the villa seemed unimpeachable; so Downie had long felt doubtful how to act, and only indulged in vague hints to his brother's prejudice.'

The pride and anger even these had kindled in the heart of the old lord, who was now gone, and the threats in which he had indulged, afforded

Richard Trevelyan a fair specimen of what would assuredly be the result were his marriage ever known at Rhoscadzhel; and when pressed on the subject pretty pointedly, he had assured his uncle—while his cheek flushed and his heart burned with shame—that he was still unwedded and free; and even as he made the false avowal, the soft pleading eyes of Constance, his own true wife, and the voices of their children, came vividly and upbraidingly to memory!

Now the foolish old man had passed away, the barrier was removed, and all should be made light that had hitherto been darkness, as her husband's hastily written letter informed her.

Yet she thought, with honest indignation, how hard it was that she had been for all these eighteen years and more kept out of her proper sphere as the wedded wife of Richard Trevelyan, often taking almost flight from *this* town and *that* hotel, lest he should be recognised; consigned hence to a life of secresy and seclusion; a life that might yet cast doubts upon the very name and birth of her children, through the whim, the old-fashioned pride and folly of an absurd and antiquated peer, whose ideas went back, even far beyond the days of his youth, when people travelled in stage-coaches, used sand and sealing-wax for letters; when steam and telegraphy were unknown, when papers were pub-

lished weekly at sixpence; and was one who deemed that railways, electricity, penny-dailies, and what is generally known as progress, are sending all the world to ruin.

Her husband's letter filled her with joy. He playfully added, "I fear I have drunk of the well of St. Keyne before you," alluding to the well-known spring near Liskeard, a draught from which the Cornish folks suppose will ensure ascendancy in domestic affairs, and the letter was signed for the first time "Your loving husband, LAMORNA."

How strange to her eye the new signature looked. She felt somehow that she preferred his old one of "Richard." But they were one and the same now, and a little time should see her in her place, as mistress of that stately dwelling, Rhoscadzhel, which she had only seen once from a distance, and felt then, with an emotion of unmerited humiliation, that she could not, and dared not, enter.

Like all its predecessors, this letter, that contained so much in a few lines, was addressed to her as "Mrs. Devereaux," and she felt a momentary pang, but remembered that to have addressed her by the title, which was now so justly hers, might have sorely perplexed the rural postman of her neighbourhood.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LADY LAMORNA.

It was a difficult task for Constance Devereaux to conceal her undeniable joy from her affectionate and observant son and daughter; and her heart would sometimes upbraid her that she should feel thus happy on an occasion which must cause them all to wear mourning, the external livery of at least conventional woe.

Denzil and his sister attributed her alternate fits of radiance and silence to pleasure at the anticipated return of their father, who on this occasion had necessarily been longer absent than usual from the Villa at Porthellick.

The equivocation and anxiety of years—years the happiness of which had in it so much of alloy—were about to be removed now! She was at last Constance Lady Lamorna of Rhoscadzhel—the wife of him who represented one of the oldest, and perhaps, most noble families in the duchy; but one passage in her husband's letter troubled and perplexed her, though it caused neither fear nor doubt

—of one kind at least—in her loving and trusting heart.

"Our marriage must still be kept a secret for *a little time;* when we meet, I shall tell you *why.*"

After so much had been endured, and now when the barrier had been swept away by death, why should there be more secresy still—at a time so critical for their Denzil, too?

For a week she tortured herself with endless surmises which might have grown into actual fears but for the arrival of her husband, looking so well and so handsome, and though grave (for he had loved his generous old uncle—his second father, as he termed him), so evidently pleased and happy; and Constance thought it fortunate that their son and daughter were both absent, she had so much to say and to hear.

Denzil had taken his rod and gone forth to fish in some lonely tarn amid the moors, while Sybil had driven away in the pony phaeton to visit some friend at a distance.

"Here's his lord—— the master himself, ma'am!" said Derrick Braddon, who was the only human being in England that shared their mystery, and who was now "dying," as the phrase is, for permission to share with others the great secret the faithful fellow had kept so long and so well; and now Dick's weather-beaten visage was radiant with

pride and pleasure as he ushered Richard into the pretty little drawing-room, when, with a girlish bound, Constance sprang into his open arms.

"Well, dearest Materfamilias," said he, kissing her tenderly on the proffered lips and radiant eyes; "you are looking as young and as charming as ever —ay, even as on that eventful morning in St. Mary's, at Montreal, a morning we may remember now without fear, my own one!"

"So the poor old man is gone at last, and our days of dissimulation are over," she replied, sobbing amid the smiles that beamed on her up-turned face.

"And you have acted wisely in not adopting deep mourning yet."

"Why—wisely?" she asked, while perceiving that her husband must have doffed his black costume somewhere on the way to Porthellick, for he was as usual attired in a shooting-suit and brown-leather gaiters; and she felt an unpleasant emotion by this circumstance, for whence this continued caution, she thought; this care, this hateful continuation of an *alias*, as it seemed, this playing of a double character, if all were right and clear? and now the passage in his letter flashed upon her memory.

"I said 'wisely,' dearest Constance; because we have still a part to play."

"Still?" she queried, mournfully, and her eyelids drooped.

"Tell me—the children know nothing of this change in our fortunes, I hope?"

"No—and dear Denzil, you are aware, has been —gazetted."

"To my old corps—so I saw; God bless the boy?" exclaimed Richard Trevelyan; "yes, but what I mean is, that I must bring you all before the world—you as the wife, and them as the children, of Lord Lamorna, with judicious care and a strength of *conviction* that none can doubt or challenge."

"Oh Richard," said she, trembling, "I do not understand you."

"Here, I am still known as Captain Devereaux; but the world, which deems me a bachelor, must be convinced that we were married to each other *in faciæ ecclesiæ*, as those lawyer-fellows have it; and the proofs of that circumstance must be forthcoming."

"Proofs?" she repeated, faintly, as she seated herself, and grew very, very pale, for it seemed to her over-sensitive mind, as if his manner had become hard and sententious, even while he stooped over, and tenderly and caressingly held in his, her little hand whereon was the wedding ring that Père Latour had consecrated; and now there ensued a brief pause, for in his knowledge of her extreme

sensibility, and the amount of his own loving nature, he feared the explanation of all he meant might wound.

Though some might have deemed the secresy to which he had condemned her for years (lest they might lose the large fortune now theirs) selfish; Richard Trevelyan had ever been nervously jealous of her honour, and the honour of their innocent children; and at times, he had accused himself of moral cowardice in his submission to the caprice of his uncle. In his heart he had always cursed the duplicity to which they had been compelled to resort, and the false position in which that duplicity had placed them all for such a length of time. All this was to be atoned for now; but he felt that it must be done wisely, warily and surely, or, as he had said, with *strength*, lest the world in which he had hitherto moved as a bachelor—that selfish and suspicious bugbear called "Society" might shrug its shoulders, and ask, "Can all this story be true?"

He had some difficulty in explaining all this to Constance, but, fortunately, what he lacked in tact, he made up for in tenderness; yet, after a minute of silence and tears, she exclaimed with uncontrollable bitterness,

"I alone am to blame! I ought to have foreseen the difficulties with which I should encumber you;

but I was a simple, a trusting and a heedless girl!——"

"Nor has the trust of your girlhood been misplaced, Constance," he urged.

"What Eden is without its serpent—what house without its skeleton? and I am yours!"

"My darling Constance, do not speak thus, and do not weep; think if Denzil or Sybil were to return and see you thus agitated—see what they never saw before, tears in your eyes; at least, tears so bitter as these," urged her husband, as he caressed her tenderly. "You know, my own love, that solid proofs of our marriage, beyond mere assertion, *must* be forthcoming; and until these proofs are in our hands, we must appear to the world as Captain and Mrs. Devereaux; we must act wisely and warily, I repeat, for the sake of our dear children."

The face of Constance became ghastly, and a dangerous gleam, such as Richard had never seen before, was in her dark eyes, while she said, huskily,

"Honest Derrick Braddon witnessed our marriage, Richard."

"True; but I am now a peer of the realm, and I wish the full proof of it all. You know that during the past year I have thrice written to the Père Latour for the certificate of our marriage, but wrote in vain, he has left my letters unanswered. I might

employ those lawyers, Gorbelly and Culverhole to sift the matter, but to use their aid, might set abroad a scandal at once; hence I now propose to start by the first steamer for America to get the necessary documents in person, and Derrick Braddon shall accompany me."

"And may not I?" she pleaded, softly.

"No, darling Constance, I shall be gone for more than a month—for two, perhaps, and you have to get Denzil fitted out for his regiment—my poor Denzil, I shall grudge those two months' loss of his society fearfully, as you may suppose."

"Pardon my momentary bitterness, dearest Richard, but after so much endurance, after such long concealment—" her voice failed her, and wreathing her soft arms round his neck, she nestled her little head on his breast, and whispered with a sigh, as if her heart would burst, "is it irrevocable —and must I too, be separated from my boy?"

"It is but for a time, Conny—no young fellow should be idle; and a year or so in the army——"

"And he will return, Richard——"

"As the son and heir of Lord Lamorna!"

"But oh, how I shall miss him!"

"You will have Sybil and me!"

"But you, too, I am about to lose."

"For a time only; and do not speak so forbodingly, dear Constance."

"I felt such disappointment that Denzil should appear at Sandhurst, and even in the Gazette, not as a Trevelyan, but as a Devereaux!"

"And a Devereaux he deems himself, and must continue to do so, till I return from Montreal. Old Trecarrel is going in command to India, and when matters are all squared here, I'll get Denzil on his Staff with ease. We have been the victims of circumstances; have I not a thousand times said, that if my uncle had discovered our marriage, we should have lost all? He is gone at last; but you know, Conny darling, that his ideas were simply absurd—in some respects suited only to the middle-ages—the middle ages do I say? By Jove, to those when the Anglo-Saxons wore coats of paint, and dyed their yellow hair blue. But are things arranged in this world wisely, think you, Constance?"

"I dare not impugn the plans of a beneficent Providence."

"But Providence never meant the conditions of life to turn out as they too often do."

"How, Richard," she, asked gently; "I don't quite understand you?"

"That the greatest number of the rich, the powerful and the most successful—by flukes, perhaps—are fools or knaves."

"Ah, but if riches brought talent—the wealthy

and powerful would be too happy, and Fate or Providence do not make them so.

"I cannot express to you how my heart was wrung with jealous envy, and even with shame, when I saw Downie's family stand around my uncle's grave, and enjoying all the freedom and hospitality of Rhoscadzhel—even his cold-blooded, fashionable wife, too—and thought how my own three tender loves were debarred——"

"And unknown—"

"Yes——d—n it, unknown, and must be for a few weeks still, but time cures all evils, and it will cure this. Yet is not the gazetting of the two cousins, Denzil and the oldest of Downie's four boys, in one paragraph, and to my old corps, too a remarkable coincidence—all the more so, that they are ignorant of each other's existence?"

"My poor Denzil—he is so bright and clever!"

"Ay, more clever than ever I was. In my time, when I met you so happily in pleasant Montreal, one could be a fair average soldier without all the polyglot accomplishments so necessary now, when he who quits Sandhurst as a candidate for a commission direct, with five shillings and threepence per diem to further his extravagance, might quite as well come out for the Church or Bar, with the chance of a safer and better paid berth in either."

"And he joins his regiment as a Devereaux—my poor boy!"

"Still harping on that string!" said Richard, a little impatiently. "On my return when matters are all sorted and made clear by the legal documents, Denzil and Sybil must be simply told, that my succession to estates and a title have necessitated a change of name."

"But our Denzil is no longer a boy—and I shall almost blush for my past duplicity, before my own girl!"

"Come, come, Conny, this is foolish; what is done cannot be undone, and it is useless to cry over spilt milk."

"And how to explain this absence, for perhaps two months, you say, when they have been longing every hour for your return from London, where they believed you to be?"

"I know not yet, Constance; but a little time will make all things clear. We had no marriage contract—a love-sick subaltern and a schoolgirl were not likely to think of such a thing—we had only the brief certificate deposited with Père Latour; but a will executed by me, in favour of you and the children shall make all right and secure; and now my little wife, for a biscuit and glass of dry sherry, as I have ridden this morning all the way from beyond Launceston."

Constance retired for a minute to bathe her eyes, to smooth her hair, and came back to look composed and smiling; for she had still to act a part.

The hour for which she had so pined and yearned —especially since her son Denzil first saw the light in a lonely village among the Apennines—the time when she should take her place as the wife of Richard Trevelyan, (not that she cared for the wealth that place might bring her) had come; and yet there were fresh delays to be endured by her, and now it might be dangers dared by him she loved so well; but he strove in his honest, manly, and affectionate way to cheer her; and as he filled his glass with the sparkling golden sherry, he kissed her once more as if they were lovers still and said merrily,

"I drink to your speedy welcome home, my dear little Lady Lamorna!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BROKEN CIRCLE.

SYBIL who was clever with her pencil, made up quite a collection of sketches from her portfolio, a pleasant labour of love, for Denzil to take with him, as a souvenir of herself and their beloved Cornwall, and skilfully the girl's able hand and artistic eye had reproduced the wondrous stone avenues of Dartmoor and Merivale, the Stone Pillar of St. Colomb, the Cliff Castles of Treryn, Tintagel and elsewhere, with many a pretty and peaceful cottage scene.

Preparations for her husband's journey, and more than all, the Indian outfit of Denzil, luckily occupied the attention of Constance for a time; thus her hands and those of Sybil were fully employed, and the minds of both had no leisure to brood over the coming separation.

Weary of the monotony of life at the villa, great was the delight of old weather-beaten Dick Braddon, to "be off" as he said, "to see the world once more with the master," whom he loved only second perhaps to Denzil, whose free frank bearing charmed

the veteran, who averred that he was exactly like what his father was, when he joined the Cornish Light Infantry, a cherry-cheeked ensign, long ago in America.

But the hour of separation drew near, when both father and son were to leave Porthellick, and depart each upon their long watery journey;—the former to America, and the latter to what seemed the other end of the world—India; and the heart of Constance began to sink in spite of herself.

"Oh, Richard," she whispered once, with her soft face nestling in her husband's neck, while his protecting arm went kindly round her; "the greatest joy on earth is to possess a child—the greatest woe to lose it! The loss of our parents we may, and must, in the course of time anticipate; but the loss of our children—never!"

"But Denzil will return, Conny—you would not have the boy tied to your apron-strings, like Sybil?" urged Richard, laughing to cheer and rouse her; but, nevertheless, the rank, title and fair fortune now before them all, the mother's anxious heart foreboded sorrow in the future; and now came the last night her boy was to sleep under his father's roof, ere he was to go forth into the world—forth like a branch torn from its parent stem.

When all were in slumber that night, poor Constance stole in to watch her Denzil as he slept. The

feeble rays of the night-lamp played on the features of her boy, and on the glitter of a laced scarlet-coat and gold epaulettes that hung on the pier glass. With the vanity natural to youth, he had been contemplating himself in his Regimental finery ere he went to repose, and his bullock-trunk and overland, lettered for "India," were among the first things that caught her eye, bringing more home to her heart the fact of his departure.

He was still hers!

*To-morrow* he should be far away from her, out on the great and stirring highway of life—her petted boy no longer; and smiles, like ripples upon shining water, seemed to spread over the smooth face of the sleeping lad, even as the tears gathered in the eyes, and prayer in the heart of the mother who watched him for a time, with her hands clasped, and stole away with many a backward glance, thinking how lonely she should be when that hour on the morrow came.

And this tall and handsome lad—this young soldier going forth to carry the Queen's colours in the distant East, was once her "baby boy," the child she had borne, nursed and nurtured. She had a sweet and sad, yet proud and joyous consciousness in this. Had he been weakly, deformed or crippled, she should have loved him all the same; but then, thank God! her Denzil was so handsome.

Often in far-away lands, on weary marches, in comfortless tents and rickety bungalows, on the banks of the Sutlej, or amid hostile Sikhs and Afghans, would he dream of the soft and loving face that had been bent in silence over his—the face he never more might see, save in those kind visions that God sends in sleep, to soothe—it may be, to sadden and to warn us.

"No child can ever know how dearly its parents love it—how they suffer in its illness, loss or departure," whispered Constance to herself; "still," she thought upbraidingly, "I left my poor father to sorrow in his humble home at Montreal—but then it was with a husband, so dear and true!"

The child that is ill or absent, is always valued the most; so poor Sybil was almost forgotten by her mother for the time. A few hours more, and both husband and son had left her in tears, to separate in London, each to pursue his own journey.

Of Richard's ultimate intentions, Denzil and Sybil were to be left in ignorance, and also of the object and purport of his absence. So Constance was left with her daughter only by her side.

The poor mother's heart felt as if thrust back upon herself now, for she was the mistress of a great family secret, which, as yet, she could not share even with Sybil.

So the long dreaded "to-morrow," had come, and

other morrows followed, and Constance began to feel herself most sadly alone. Often she stole into the well-known room to kiss the pillow on which her Denzil's cheek had rested; to weep over the bed as if a death had been there, and not the departure of a gallant boy full of hope and life; and on each occasion as she lingered there, she strove to pourtray in fancy his face, as she last saw him, sleeping all unconscious that she hovered near; and with a wild but loving presentiment and hope that he would again occupy it some day, she kept his room intact, exactly as he had left it; his books, his fencing foils on those particular shelves, his old hat stuck round with fishing flies, on that particular peg where he was wont to hang it; his rods and guns, in yonder corner; though every detail, such as these, reminded her of him more vividly, fed her grief and roused the intense longing for his presence and return to her arms again.

"India—India?" she would say half aloud when communing with herself; "it may be ten years of separation. Ten years! Oh—no, never, surely! With my Richard's great influence as a peer of the realm, that must never be permitted. In ten years what changes must inevitably happen; who may be alive then, and who dead? Sybil should then be seven-and-twenty—married perhaps—and to whom? —with children it may be—my poor innocent

Sybil! Oh no; three years at the utmost, and Denzil shall be again by his mamma's side!"

So the lonely Constance pondered, hoped and lovingly spun out like a web, her desires or mental view of the future, striving to gather happiness therefrom; while Sybil sought in vain to cheer her with music, to lure her out for a walk in the willowed dell, or a drive along the coast road, in their pretty pony phaeton.

The month was October now. With a sullen wail the autumnal blasts swept from the wooded hollows of Moorwinstow to the cavernous headland of Tintagel, cresting before their breath the waves of the Bristol Channel. There came gusts of rain too, that beat dolefully on the window panes, with an angry and impatient patter, adding to the dreariness of heart experienced by those in the Villa of Porthellick. The season was bleak, and nowhere could it seem more so than among the barren moors, the sea-beat bluffs, and resounding caverns, the wind swept pasture lands and promontories of Cornwall.

The woods were almost bare; the few remaining leaves, fluttered brown and crisp on the bared twigs; the stackyards were full, and the produce of the potato fields was consigned to long brown pits of fresh earth and straw, for the coming winter; the uplands were covered with decaying stubble, or

being ploughed, while, gorged with worms, the great crows sat sleepily in the shining furrows. Thick as gnats in summer, the dingy coloured sparrows twittered in the hedgerows, which were being lopped and trimmed; and the axes of the woodmen were heard in thicket and copse; while the smoke of the steam-engine that worked and drained the adjacent copper-mine, hung low in the frowsy air, adding at times to the gloom of the landscape.

Richard Trevelyan had sailed, and Denzil too; and Constance was aware that each of them had to traverse a wintry sea, the former before he returned and the latter before he reached his destination.

The public prints had duly announced that "the Right Hon. Lord Lamorna and suite (*i.e.* old Derrick Braddon) had gone for a tour in America;" and Denzil if his eyes ever saw the announcement—which is doubtful—could little have dreamed how nearly it concerned him, and the mother on whom he doted, and whom he still knew only as "Mrs. Devereaux."

The latter had to make many an excuse, even to Sybil, to account for her husband's protracted absence from the villa; and Downie Trevelyan, when he read the above announcement in the "Morning Post," wiped his gold eye-glass and read it again with much perplexity and secret annoyance, while surmising "what the deuce could take

Richard so suddenly to America at this season of the year!"

The new task and anxiety of watching the shipping intelligence next occupied the attention of Constance. The steamer in which Richard sailed, had been seen, signalled and spoken with in sundry Atlantic latitudes and longitudes; and some seventeen days or so saw her safely at the end of her voyage; but the transport, a great Indiaman with Denzil on board, was seldom heard of, some at long dates; and at longer dates too, came his hastily written letters from St. Helena, and from Ascension, or by homeward-bound ships; few men, even of the most wealthy, thought then of proceeding to India by the scarcely developed overland route; and how fondly those letters were read over and over again, the last thing at night, and the first in the morning, the mother, situated as Constance was then, may imagine; for the loving little family circle was broken now.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FOREBODINGS.

If ever Constance left the villa, she sought the direction of the coast, and when there never wearied of watching the wide expanse of the Bristol Channel with its passing ships and steamers; for the changing ocean was the path by which her loved ones were to return to her; Richard, within a month perhaps, now; but their son Denzil—oh, years must elapse, her heart foreboded and knew, ere she should see him again.

And now as the season advanced, and storms and wrecks among the Scilly Isles and about the Land's End were not unfrequent, her soul became a prey to nervous fears, that were fed and fostered in spite of herself by Derrick's sister, Winny Braddon, a superstitious old Cornish woman, who had been Sybil's nurse.

Winny, a devout believer in dreams, visions, the virtues of miraculous wells and so forth, was wont to declare that when all specifics failed she had been cured of rheumatism by crawling through the

famous Men-an-tol, or Holed Stone near Lanyon; and now she shook her grey head ominously when the wind blew a gale and rolled a heavy surf upon the shore, and averred that she could hear the wreck-bells booming under the sea at Boscastle. So Constance, though naturally free from all idle fancies save that which we may term the affectionate superstition of the heart, could not listen to the croaking of this old woman without vague and growing fear; for though Winny knew nothing of the interest that "Mrs. Devereaux" had in the family of Lamorna, or her connection therewith (Derrick having kept his secret well) those sounds amid the deep at Boscastle were supposed by Cornish tradition to bode evil to the line of Trevelyan.

For it would appear, as Winny Braddon related, that long ago the villagers of Boscastle were very envious of the melodious and musical bells that were rung in the church of Tintagel, to which they were a gift from its superior the Abbot of Fontevrault in Normandy. So De Bottreaux who was lord of the manor, and the site of whose castle is now marked by a green mound only, to gratify those villagers who were his vassals, ordered from London a merry peal for the spire of Boscastle church; and those bells were duly shipped on board a vessel named the *Koithgath* caravel, for her captain, Launcelot Trevelyan, was a younger son of

the family of Lamorna. He had been a wild fellow, of whose future career evil had been predicted by a *Pyrdrak Brâs* (old Cornish for a great-witch) who dwelt in the Zawn Reeth, a granite cavern at Nans Isal, on the western side of the bay so named—a wild and savage place surrounded by masses of scattered rock.

So Master Launcelot ran off to sea, and served under Drake and Hawkins in many a dark and desperate day's work among the Spaniards in Brazil, Madeira, and the Cape de Verde; and had once been round the Cape of Storms as far as the realms of that mysterious personage then known as Prester John.

Thus in due time, steered by Paul Poindester, a famous pilot from the Scilly Isles, the *Koithgath*, with the bells on board, arrived in the offing and in sight of Boscastle, with all its furzy hollows, above which rose the castle of Bottreaux, with the standard of its owner flying—a great banner, bearing three toads and a griffin.

As the ship drew in shore, the bells of Tintagel church, that towers still on a bleak, exposed, and lofty cliff to the westward of King Arthur's castle, rang out a taunting and a joyous peal that mingled with the booming of the ocean as it rolled on the bluffs below, or far up the sandy bay of Trebarreth Strand.

Then, according to the story, Launcelot Trevelyan swore an exulting oath as he surveyed the stupendous scenery of his native shore, adding,

"I am here again—thank my good ship and her canvas!"

"Nay," said the old pilot Poindester, as he reverently lifted his hat, "rather thank God and St. Michael of Cornwall."

"By Heaven," rejoined Trevelyan, "I thank myself and the fair wind only."

Poindester though fearless, for he was a native of those dangerous Isles where for one who dies a natural death nine are drowned, rebuked this irreverence, on which the wild Trevelyan stormed and blasphemed, and forgetting to heed his compass or steerage, permitted his caravel to be dashed ashore, just as a sudden storm came on, and the waves of the Bristol Channel hurled her on the cliffs of the Black Pit, where every soul on board perished, save old Paul Poindester. From the high gilded poop of his caravel, Launcelot Trevelyan, with a fierce malediction, cast into the sea, before it swallowed him up, the silver whistle and chain, his badge of naval authority, the gift of Sir Francis Drake, lest it should become some wrecker's prey; and as the timbers parted, and the ship went down into the angry sea, the clangour of the bells resounded in her hold; and there to this day they

are heard by people loitering on the shore, when storms are nigh—or when aught is about to happen to the family of Lamorna, add the superstitious folks of Cornwall.

"Oh why did this absurd old woman relate such a boding story to me?" thought Constance, for situated as she was, she had become somewhat of a prey to gloomy and grotesque fancies; hence, often in the night she would dream of wrecks, and seem to hear the sound of alarm-bells in her ear, and starting from bed, would draw up the window-blind and look forth to see if a storm was raving without, forgetting then, even though it were so, all might be calm and peaceful elsewhere.

Then when she saw the autumnal moon in all its unclouded glory flooding her chamber and her white night-dress with silver lustre; that all was calm and still, the diamond-like stars sparkling above the dark willows in the glen, or the darker woodland in the distance; and that no noises came to her listening ear, but perhaps the bark of a house-dog, or such as may be aptly termed the sounds of night and silence, she would go back to her lonely pillow with a prayer on her lips for those who were absent, and for all who were on the sea.

A letter from Richard, made her supremely happy!

He had reached Montreal in safety. The poor

old curé of the secluded little chapel of St. Mary—the good Père Latour—was dead, and had been so for some time; hence the reason that her husband's letters had remained unanswered. Even the little acolyte, the other witness of their marriage, had gone to his last home; and now in memory, Constance could recal the thin, spare figure of the old clergyman, with his white hair brushed behind his ears, his peculiar shovel hat, long black soutane, cape and gaiters to the knee—for he had been a man of the old school of French colonial priests.

"His little chapel and vestry, both built of wood, as you will remember, Conny, were burned down three years after our regiment left the city," continued Richard's letter; "and all the Records there perished in the flames; among other things, the volume of the Register in which our marriage was entered. But, most providentially, the successor of Latour in the poor incumbency, found among some of his papers, the signed copy—or rather I should say, the original of our marriage lines or certificate—which we had never received. *It is now in my possession*, and I have folded it inside a will which I prepared on the voyage out—a will dearest Conny, in which, to make all certain for the future—as there are those at home, whom I doubt—I leave all I have in the world to you for life, and to Denzil and Sybil after you,

absolutely. Your poor father and mother are interred not far from the grave of Père Latour, and I have ordered white marble crosses to be erected to the memory of the three. I shall sail for England a fortnight hence, in the steamer *Admiral,* and till then, shall renew in sweet fancy the days of our loverhood, by many a ramble about Montreal; by Hochlega, the picturesque site of the old Indian village, now its eastern suburb; the nine aisles of the great Cathedral; the gardens of the Convent of Notre Dame, and among the mountains close by—in many a shady walk and lane; and Heaven and myself alone can know how I miss you and our dearest Sybil, and how I am longing to return." It was signed "*Lamorna.*"

"My dear, dear Richard!" sobbed the wife, while her tears of joy fell fast.

"All the places I mention, you must remember well," he added in a postscript; "and you may imagine how sad it is for me to wander alone where once we were so happy together."

"He was to sail in a fortnight from the date of his letter," thought Constance, with a glow of pleasure in her heart; "he must now be on the sea! and in a fortnight from this, I shall see him again—my dear, dear husband—so kind, so good, so true and thoughtful, even to mark, unasked by me, the last resting-place of poor mamma and papa—and

even of the good Père Latour. The latter act, is in itself, a compliment to me."

Then an emotion of terror seized her, as she perused the letter again.

What if the attested copy of those important "lines," their certificate of marriage, *had perished* in the same fire which consumed the wooden chapel, the vestry, and its registers! What then would have been her fate, and more than all, by sequence, the fate and position of the children she idolised—her proud boy Denzil, and the beautiful Sybil, now budding on the verge of womanhood?

A stigma—a stain—she could never remove, might have been on them, to the end of their lives; and her soul seemed to die within her as she thought of the peril—the narrow escape, they had all made!

She thanked Heaven with fervour in her heart, and again and again, it swelled with gratitude to her husband, and with love for him and confidence in him; with joy, too, that he would so soon hear all this from her own loving lips—for in a few days now, the *Admiral* would be due in the Thames!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE LONELY TARN.

While Constance Trevelyan—or Lady Lamorna, for so we ought to name her, though still known only as Mrs. Devereaux—was counting the hours of her husband's absence, and looking forward fondly to his return, Sybil, unnoticed, was absent from home more often and for longer periods than had been her wont; and the mother, preoccupied by her own secret thoughts, and anxiety for those who were far distant, failed to remark the circumstance till it was incidentally mentioned by Winny Braddon.

When questioned, Constance remarked with concern, that Sybil blushed deeply, and hastened to show her sketch-book, now nearly full, as an evidence of her artistic industry, and the progress she had made; she did not add with whom, or that she had a lover. She who never before had a secret from her mamma, was beginning to have one now; and had the latter looked more closely at the sketch-book, she might have found traces and

touches of a bolder and more masterly pencil than Sybil's; and it all came to pass thus.

A mile or two from the Villa of Porthellick, there lies a lake, which had been a favourite resort of her brother Denzil when fishing for pike; and of this place, and a great old Druidical stone that stands thereby, Sybil wished to make a sketch, and on a suitable day proceeded thither with all her apparatus, as she was anxious to have her production finished before her papa's return.

It was a lonely tarn, deep and dark, yet there the bright green leaves and snowy flowers of the water lilies floated, and the voracious pike which rose at times to snap a fly or so, went plunging to the oozy bottom at the sight of aught so unusual as a human being invading the solitude.

There were within its circuit, three tiny willow-tufted isles, where the water-ducks built their nests amid the osiers, and near which an occasional wild swan flapped defiance with its wings among the floating lilies that impeded its stately progress.

On the hill slopes the varied tints of autumn were in all their beauty; the ripened apples and pears were dropping among the long grass of many an orchard; green yet lingered amid the foliage of the old Cornish elms; but the beeches were almost blood red, and the oaks were crisped and brown.

In the calm depth of the tarn was reflected the shadow of the giant stone pillar, around which the storms, the winds and rain of perhaps three thousand years had swept; yet there it stood, solid, silent, grim and monstrous. Could that stone have spoken, what a tale it might have told of savage rites and human sacrifice; what a history unfolded of races long since passed away or merged in others —the men of days before even the galleys of the Phœnicians cast anchor in Bude Bay, when their crews came to barter for tin with the wild aborigines of Cornwall.

Sybil, seated on a little camp-stool, was so intent upon her work, that some time elapsed before she perceived that another artist—whether professional or, like herself an amateur, she could not determine —was similarly occupied not far from her; and insensibly her eye wandered, from time to time, in the direction of this stranger.

He was decidedly a handsome young man, whose grey tweed suit and round hat of grey felt, encircled by a narrow crape band, failed to conceal a very distinguished air. His features were good and well bronzed by a foreign sun, apparently. He was without whiskers, or was closely shaven; but a smart mustache and dark eyebrows gave character to his face. He was seated on a fragment of rock, and in intervals between the progress of

his work and the whiffs of a cigar, spoke caressingly to a large dog that lay near him on the grass.

The latter, a magnificent Thibet mastiff, with heavy jowl and pendant flap-like ears, suddenly rose and came slowly, leisurely and steadily forward to Sybil, and after a glance of survey, eyed her with what was almost a smile—if a *dog* can be said to smile. He then sniffed her skirts, and pawed them with his enormous paw. Sybil evinced no fear; she patted the dog's huge rough head; but was somewhat surprised, when he lay down on her skirts with the utmost composure, and showed no disposition to release her.

The young man, whose eyes had followed, with some interest, the motions of his dog, now whistled to him; but the mastiff did not stir.

"Rajah — Rajah — you impudent rascal, come here!" he cried.

But Rajah made no other response, than by whipping the turf with his long tail.

Upon this his master came round the margin of the tarn, and approaching Sybil, threw aside his cigar, lifted his hat and apologized, adding,—

"I trust that my dog has not alarmed you?"

"Oh no—not in the least," replied Sybil, who began to feel somewhat embarrassed now.

"I assure you that he is very gentle; but he is

permitting himself to be too free, and very few young ladies would, like you, have seen such an animal approach them without betraying signs of alarm, and all that sort of thing. Get up sir!"

"Oh, please don't," said Sybil holding out an ungloved and very pretty hand, deprecatingly, between the dog and the young man's uplifted cane; "all dogs, and even cats, like me."

"Thereby acknowledging your power — eh?" responded the stranger, looking down admiringly into the soft, bright, earnest face, and clear dark eyes that were turned upward to his own.

"I don't know what you mean by my power," said Sybil, with simplicity; "but, as most people like me, why should not dogs—and—and this is such a splendid fellow!"

"I have brought him from a very distant country —he was the farewell gift of a friend who died, otherwise," he added, gallantly, "I should beg your acceptance of him."

Sybil now coloured more deeply, and became uneasy; but the stranger resumed in his most suave tone,—

"And you have been sketching this pretty little lake—like me? Our tastes and occupation are quite similar!"

Sybil had closed her book of sketches.

"Will you not do me the favour to——"

"Show you my poor production—do you mean, sir?"

"Yes."

"But you may be an artist, and a well-skilled one."

"And what then?"

"I should blush for my work."

"Nay. Well, then, I am *not* an artist, but merely an amateur—an officer on leave; yet I am fond of using my pencil, and have the regimental reputation of doing so with pretty good success."

Sybil thought of her brother Denzil—he too was an officer; poor Denzil, now so far, far away—and she gave her new acquaintance a half shy and half doubtful glance, that served to charm him very much, and then showed her sketch, which he praised warmly, as by good breeding and in duty bound.

It was doubtless cleverly done, but his eye wandered to the rare and delicate beauty of the little hand that had achieved it. Her sketch, however, was inferior to his own, which he now produced, with Sybil's own figure seated on the camp-stool introduced in the middle distance, so as to give the exact proportion of the great rock-pillar.

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed, "you have *me* in your sketch, as well as the big stone."

"Could I omit the most pleasing feature in my little landscape?"

Sybil coloured again, for her education, and the peculiar mode in which she had been reared, made her, at times, shy and reserved; she knew not why, for to be so was not her natural character, which was rather candid, frank, and free; so, to change the subject from herself, she hastened to turn over the leaves of the stranger's sketch-book, wherein were many drawings full of spirit and interest.

"That wooden cross," said he, "marks the grave of poor Jack Delamere, who gave me Rajah, through whom I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance to-day. He died when we were on the march up country to Allahabad, and I buried him in a grove of date palms."

"And he lies there alone?" said Sybil, her eyes involuntarily wandering to the great dog which lay near them on the grass.

"Quite alone—poor Jack! he was the soul of the mess-bungalow."

"And what is this Hall with the wonderful pillars?"

"Oh! that is a Buddhist Temple—all hewn out of the living rock. I sketched it at Ellora. Those caves are masses of carving, and are among the most wonderful things in India, as they often consist of many apartments or halls of vast height, decorated,

as you see, with elaborate columns and monstrous statues. My next sketch is a Hindoo water-girl. I gave her a rupee to stand for me at Arcot; but, as her clothing is somewhat scanty, we shall skip to the next. Ah—that is a mango tree, and here are the palace of Mysore and the town and fort of Agra."

"How much you have seen of the world!" said Sybil, her dark eyes dilating as she glanced for a moment at the stranger's young and handsome face; "I wonder if Denzil will ever look upon those places. Heavens, how poor and mean do my Cornish sketches of ruins, rocks, and engines look, after yours!"

"Nay, do not say so," replied the other, smiling, as he surveyed with growing interest the soft bright face of the speaker, under its piquant little hat and veil; "hideous as the edifices are in reality, some of our mining engine-houses, with all their chains and pulleys, wheels and timber, blocks and gearing, their heaps of rubbish and *débris*, they make somewhat picturesque sketches."

"True; but I prefer those great solemn stones of unknown antiquity, and I never tire of drawing them."

"But they are so deucedly alike," replied the young officer; "and now for *your* book—ah, do permit me," he added, turning the leaves.

"That is the Lake of Como, where we passed several months," said Sybil, tremulous with hesitation, for what she deemed alike the boldness of the attempt and the poverty of her execution. "I now wonder how I dared to think of depicting such a scene, with all its white villas and green groves of orange and flowering arbutas; its cliffs and crags, and, over all, the snow-clad peaks of the Alps, and the mountains of the Brianza covered with pine forests!"

"Perhaps each sketch is the souvenir of some past or tender happiness? And this stately palace, with the terrace before it?"

"Is one where papa and mamma resided when I was very young."

"You are not very old yet," was the laughing rejoinder.

"It is on the Arno. But how often have I wished for power to depict the lovely Lake of Como, as we could see it by night from the windows of our villa —the shore all dark, or dotted only by the lights in many a palace and dwelling, the snowy summits of the Splugen Alps rising against the starlit sky, and the oars of the gondoliers flashing as their little vessels shot across the sheet of silent water."

"You are quite an enthusiast!" said the officer, smiling; and at that moment, with her sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, the usually pale girl looked

radiantly beautiful; but her dark eyes drooped, and she replied—

"I did so love Como and our pleasant picnics to Bellaggio and other places, where the orange-trees overhang the water so closely that the golden fruit dipped in it from time to time, when the laden branches were stirred by the passing wind."

"Now you will surely agree with me, that when contrasted with such scenery as you describe, our Cornish rock-pillars and mines are but stupid affairs?"

"Ah, no—I cannot assent to that; there is Bottalick Mine, for example, where the gloomy precipices of slate are hewn into such fantastic shapes, and the great engine, perched on the ledge of a terrible cliff, enables the miner to work below the sea. Oh, think of that, to be quarrying for copper and tin in damp grottoes and cells four hundred and eighty feet below the ocean, and to hear its waves—the same waves that dash against Cape Cornwall—rolling the mighty boulders in thunder on the bluffs overhead!"

"Have *you* been down and heard all that?"

"No," replied Sybil, blushing for her own energy and enthusiasm,

"How then——"

"Denzil has been down often."

"Denzil again," said the stranger with a smile,

and perhaps the faintest tone of pique; "you are surely very fond of this Denzil."

"Fond—I love him dearly!"

"A candid admission."

"He is my only brother."

"I am so glad to hear that he is a brother, and not—not——"

"What?"

"A cousin or—friend."

Sybil felt that the conversation was wandering from the picturesque, and now said, a little hastily,

"I must bid you good morning—my way lies there," she added, pointing westward.

"And mine also; so far, at least, as the high road—allow me to have the pleasure of carrying your camp-stool."

"Many thanks."

"Do you reside in this neighbourhood?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes—a little way from this," she replied, evasively.

"*I* am on a visit to an old Indian friend—General Trecarrel,' said the stranger, in a tone and manner calculated to invite confidence; but Sybil instantly became reserved. Her absent parent, she knew not why, had ever most sedulously avoided the General and all his family, and her mamma had apparently acquiesced in this, for they knew that the General

would at once, in the spurious "Captain Devereaux," recognise Richard Trevelyan. "You, perhaps, know the Trecarrels?" added her companion.

"I have not the pleasure—though I have heard of them, of course," replied Sybil, adjusting her veil tightly over her face, with an air of annoyance.

The gentleman said no more; but in silence carried her sketch-book and camp-stool until they reached the high road, where, aware that to remain longer with her might appear intrusive, he lifted his hat, and with studious politeness bade her adieu.

Sybil hastened homeward, nor dared to look back, though perfectly conscious that the eyes of the stranger, whose voice seemed to linger in her ear, would be looking after her more than once. She had all a young girl's perfect conviction of this.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCERNING FLIRTATION.

THE next noon proved a lovely autumnal one, and Sybil repaired once more to the tarn for the purpose of giving a few finishing touches to her sketch. She would have blushed with annoyance, and indignantly repudiated the idea that a chance of the stranger being there, perhaps, for the same purpose, led her to go at precisely the same hour as on the preceding day. And yet, though a disappointment, it was somewhat of a relief to her, that neither he nor his great dog were in sight; the floating swans and the huge rock-pillar alone met her eye in the solitude; and seating herself, she spread out her skirts, threw up her veil, and assumed her pencil; but in the midst of her work, her tiny white hand grew tremulous, every pulse quickened, and a thrill passed through her when she heard steps among the long rank grass; the great nose of the Thibet mastiff was placed upon her knee, and she perceived her new friend again approaching, but on horseback.

*He* had not made even the pretence of coming to

sketch as on the preceding morning; he was without the materials for doing so, and hence must have come deliberately in search of her, for he dismounted.

"I am indeed fortunate in meeting you here again," said he, "but I shall not intrude, as I fear I did yesterday; I am merely rambling towards the sea-shore, to enjoy the breeze and a cigar till some friends join me."

Sybil, who felt that she was painfully pale, bowed to her new acquaintance, who manifested no haste to prosecute his "ramble," but seemed perfectly confident and disposed to be politely familiar. Still Sybil had no emotion of alarm at this; she had never in her life been insulted, and felt that there was no real cause to repulse him, save that he was a visitor of the Trecarrels.

He, on the other hand, while gazing from time to time into her upturned face, was struck more by the calm, honest, and innocent expression of her radiant features than by their beauty, which was less that of form than of character, for though small and exquisitely feminine, her face, like that of her mother, was strongly marked, by the darkness of her eyes, their brows and long lashes. Her mouth certainly was beautifully formed, with a soft smile ever playing about it, for she was naturally of an arch and highly impressionable nature.

He did not permit the conversation to flag, but hovered near her, venturing to look over her shoulder from time to time, and giving little suggestions concerning her drawing, while in reality he was admiring the ladylike contour of her head, the delicacy of her slender neck, and the gloss of a single thick dark ringlet that strayed so captivatingly behind.

The first flush of emotion passed away in Sybil's breast, and insensibly she found herself lured into an easy interchange of opinion on various subjects; for in the topics of foreign travel, the galleries, habits, tastes, and amusements of other lands, they had ample matter for conversation, and found themselves sliding into the position of friends, and talking of things and themes that seldom occupy the thoughts of a young girl.

Now, as each knew not the name of the other, and could not ask it, there was a decided awkwardness in this; and as they continued to talk with animation, the huge Thibet mastiff, who had been their *introducteur*, rolled his great dark eyes from one to the other, and lashed the grass with his tail, as if quite satisfied with the result.

"After the colourless Indo-Britons and yellow Bengallees, how lovely seems the complexion of this fresh young English girl!" was the ever-recurring thought of the young officer, as he surveyed her

critically, from her smart hat and feather to her foot that peeped from under her dress; and a lovely little foot it was—tiny enough to have entered the famous slipper of Cinderella.

That the solitary girl was a lady was evident to him; her carriage and bearing were full of graceful ease, and she had an attraction of manner and gesture peculiarly her own; but *who* was she, that she, at her early years, had seen so much of the world, and could speak of Spain and Rome, of Athens and Sicily, and seemed to know every second village among the wilds of the Apennines and the Abruzzi?

The sketching of this day was somewhat protracted, and Sybil became aware that their eyes sought each other with an interest she had never felt before in those of a stranger, and that each time they so met, her pulses quickened and her cheek flushed or grew pale. Whence was this emotion? she whispered in her heart.

"I shall often think of this moorland tarn, when I am far away," said the officer.

"You leave this soon, then?" she remarked.

"Yes; I am, ere long, going back to India."

"My brother Denzil has gone there to join his regiment."

Had the stranger asked the almost inevitable military question, "What regiment?" a little dis-

covery might have been made; but he was full of the girl's beauty, and thought of that only. Something of admiration or of ardour in his eyes inspired her with confusion, and abruptly closing her book as on the preceding day, she rose from the bank on which she had been seated, and said, with a little trepidation,

"I am going now, and—and here our sketching and meetings must end."

"Ah! why?"

"I fear," she stammered as she spoke, aware that her speech was full of awkwardness—"I fear that I have done wrong in—in——"

"What?"

"Engaging in quite a flirtation with a total stranger."

"You cannot flirt—you are too sensible and artless; neither could I—with you, at least."

"Have you never flirted?" asked Sybil, laughing to cover what she felt to be a second mistake.

"Often."

"Then why not with me?" she asked naïvely and archly.

"First, tell me what is flirtation?"

"I know what it is; but cannot define or describe it."

"Shall I make the attempt?"

"Do, please," said Sybil, now laughing outright.

"It is neither coquetry nor exactly playing at courtship. It is one of those things most difficult indeed of description and of definition. It depends so much upon the time and place, the tone and tenor of those who attempt it, and on the mood of the moment, whether it be sad or gay. It is perilous work among the young and beautiful, as it is often so much mere nonsense, and yet is so much more dangerous to one's peace of mind than any nonsense could ever be. It is not so earnest or solemn as deliberate love-making, and yet it is not quite a mockery of it. It is a sharp weapon in the hands of the wary; but a dangerous pastime for those who have had no experience in *affaires du cœur*. It is a kind of lovemaking that commits one to no promise, and yet may raise the proudest and wildest anticipations in the breast, and elicit the most unwary confidence. Thus it is difficult to find where flirtation exactly begins, and still more to say where it may end—perhaps in real love and marriage. I fear I have read you quite a dissertation on the subject, a most hazardous one while looking into your bright eyes; and now tell me," added the officer, his tone and manner becoming more soft and earnest, "have you not done injustice to yourself and to me, for in all we have talked over so pleasantly both yesterday and to-day has anything of this vague kind been attempted?"

"Most certainly not," replied Sybil, laughing again.

"With *you* it would indeed be perilous for me,' said the officer, taking her hand caressingly between his own; "for I could not feign, where I would rather feel."

His eyes were dark and deep, their colour a kind of blue, difficult to define, but unfathomable in expression, though very soft just then; and now Sybil grew pale, for if the speaker was not flirting, he had suddenly slid into downright love-making; so she said, with an effort—

"We have been here more than an hour; am I not detaining you from your friends?"

"Perhaps," said he, with an air of pique; "pardon me for looking at my watch. Two o'clock, by Jove! and I promised to meet the Trecarrel girls on the Camelford road half-an-hour ago. I shall catch it from little Rose for this! And now good morning —pardon me again if I have seemed intrusive, but I do not despair of our meeting again."

He had mounted while speaking, and, lifting his hat with studious politeness, cantered off, while Rajah went bounding and barking before him.

"What a bright little fairy it is—and so clever with her pencil! who the deuce *can* she be?" he was thinking, while Sybil, with a vague sense of disappointment and doubt, looked after him, half

fearing that she had been too pointed in her hint that he should leave her; and yet how were they to continue such meetings as strangers.

In her lonely life, at least latterly, since they had settled at Porthellick, she had met but few persons, and with none so pleasing as this young officer.

She hoped to meet him again on a more recognisable footing, for she felt that though stolen interviews might be very sweet, they could not be without some peril; and to the young girl's mind, it seemed that the formation of the acquaintance —the whole adventure—was quite like some of the episodes to be read of in novels; for a box from "Mudie's," came regularly to Porthellick Villa, and perhaps, by the laws of such literature, her strange friend might prove a peer of the realm—a prince it might be, incog.; who could say?

Sybil lingered long by the lonely tarn, watching the white swans floating among the broad-leaved water-lilies, thinking over all the stranger had said, recalling the pleasantly modulated tones of his voice and the expression of his dark blue eyes (if blue they were), till the sound of hoofs on the distant highway drew her attention in that direction, and with something perhaps of jealousy and pique, she saw him gallop past with two ladies, both well mounted on bright bay horses. They were the Trecarrels, dashing and handsome girls, and the

sound of their merry voices and ringing laughter came clearly over the moor as they rode at a scamper towards Lanteglos, on the roof of the old parish church of which the arms of the Trelawneys and Trecarrels have been carved for centuries.

"And these girls have him with them always," thought she, as she turned homeward. "What matter is it to me—the acquaintance of a couple of days? why should the idea of him affect me so?"

After this day she sought the vicinity of the rock-pillar and the tarn no more.

She was too open and candid in all her actions, and loved her mamma too well to conceal ultimately from her the pleasant interviews she had by the moorland tarn "with such a delightful young man;" but there her confidence ended; she did not give the additional information that on three successive Sundays, when mamma was too ill to attend church, he had lingered or walked by the side of her basket-phaeton, to the manifest annoyance of the Misses Trecarrel, or that she had faintly promised, *some* day, to make with him a joint sketch of certain rocks upon the sea-shore; still less did she whisper, that in her secret heart she liked him well, or trusted to time or chance for the establishment of an interchange of thought as yet concealed, "as though the bridge between them was yet too frail to cross;" and Constance, occupied solely by solici-

tude concerning the now-protracted absence of her husband, did not at first make any inquiries.

Sybil found the stranger's image, his tones and words recurring perpetually to her mind in spite of herself, and she blushed at the conviction. She had few male friends—beyond the burly rector and old village doctor, perhaps none—and certainly none that she had met elsewhere proved so graceful and winning as this unknown admirer. To her partial eyes, he seemed the beau-ideal of manly beauty, while to those of others—even the Trecarrel girls—he was simply a passably handsome fellow.

"Why do I think of him at all?" she would ask of herself: "though so young, he may be married—or engaged—engaged perhaps to that Rose Trecarrel of whom he seemed so much afraid the other day. Yet he may surmise the same of me—I, Sybil Devereaux, married!" and then she laughed at her own conceit.

"There is a depth in the human heart which, once stirred, is long, long, ere its waters again subside," and this depth he had contrived to stir in the heart of Sybil. She who had seemed as bright as the day, and happy as the blackbird that sang on the adjacent rose-trees, became silent and thoughtful and apt to indulge in dreamy moods.

Old Winny Braddon was the first to detect this; and so she set herself to watch, and hence the hints

she gave to Constance—hints which caused the production of the sketch-book, with some confusion on Sybil's part, as recorded in our tenth chapter, and she took her young favourite to task in the usual mode of old nurses, by commenting upon the enormity of thinking of love or marriage at her years.

Now Sybil, like every young girl of her age, had her day-dreams of a lover, just such a lover as this, but she had not, as yet, thought of marriage. Such a catastrophe—such a separation from "dearest mamma"—had not quite entered her mind; but now, by Winny Braddon's remarks, it seemed to be thrust upon her consideration. She blushed and felt abashed, as if the modesty of her nature had been assailed, and her girlish mind was filled with a vague sense of dread and awe, she knew not of what or of whom.

However, it chanced that on the last day he had lingered by the side of her pony-phaeton for a few minutes, resting his arms on the side thereof in such a way that she could not, without positive rudeness, have driven off, she had been resolving, but not without a struggle in her heart, that she would place herself in his way no more.

"This must end," had been her thought; "it is most unfair to poor mamma, and is unwise for my own peace of mind;" and it was while she thus

determined, he came to her smiling, and leaning on the side of the little phaeton, when the Trecarrels were conversing with the rector's family, said in his pleasant voice,

"Shall we ever resume the little discussion we had so merrily on that delightful day beside the old rock-pillar?"

"Discussion—on what?" asked Sybil, timidly.

"Flirtation—Miss Devereaux."

"What! you know my name?"

"Yes; I am happy to say I do now, Sybil Devereaux."

"How came this to pass?"

"Simply enough: the Trecarrel girls told me."

"But I do not know them," said Sybil, with a tone of pique.

"May I have the pleasure of introducing——"

"Excuse me, please, but not just now," said she, hastily, remembering how her father had ever avoided the family of the General.

"And now I must tell you my name—Audley Trevelyan, late of the 14th Hussars."

"I have surely heard it before," said Sybil, pondering, "but where I know not now."

It was in the *Gazette* together with that of Denzil, but she had forgotten the circumstance, and he said, smiling still,

"You may easily have heard it—the name is

peculiar to Cornwall, and my uncle is Lord Lamorna."

"Indeed! all Cornwall has heard that the late lord was a very, very proud man.

"Absurdly so; but I must bid you adieu. Rose Trecarrel is impatient."

"We are going, Mr. Trevelyan," said that young lady, with some asperity of tone, from the window of the carriage in which she and her sister were seated; and lifting his hat, Audley hastened to join them. The footman threw up the carriage-steps, fussily closed the door, and they departed. So, as doubtless the reader has foreseen, Sybil's admirer was her own cousin; yet neither knew of the relationship.

She drove off in a somewhat dubious state of mind, amid which, as she permitted the reins to drop listlessly on the backs of her two little ponies and allowed them to go at their own pace, she gave way to the current of thought, and ended in a quiet shower of tears, which, however, calmed and soothed her. She had an undefined emotion of pique alike at this stranger, Mr. Trevelyan, and Rose Trecarrel; and as she had been learning to love the former, she resented his extreme intimacy with the latter, and she knew all the perils of propinquity with a girl so lovely as Rose undoubtedly was.

Hence, more than ever did she resolve to avoid him, and even sought to nurse herself into emotions of anger by fancying there was something that savoured of forwardness in the mode in which he had recently addressed her. The moment she reached home and tossed the reins to the groom, she hastened to the side of Constance.

"Oh, mamma," she exclaimed, in a tumult of excitement, "I have discovered the name of the gentleman about whom you spoke to me lately!"

"The hero of the sketch-book, and it is—what?"

"Mr. Audley Trevelyan; don't you think it so pretty?"

Constance was silent for nearly a minute. Then foreseeing much trouble and danger if this intimacy were permitted to ripen before her husband's return, and the full recognition of herself, her son and daughter, in their proper place, and in society in general—society, "that Star Chamber of the well-bred world,"—she said, with grave energy, while taking Sybil's flushed face between her soft white hands,—

"Promise to me, darling, that you will meet him no more—at least until advised by your papa."

"I give you my promise, dearest mamma."

"Remember that he is the friend, the guest, of those Trecarrels whom your papa has ever avoided for reasons best known to himself, though they

seem people of the best style; and you owe this obedience to him in his absence."

"Have no fear for me, mamma; I shall ever obey you," replied Sybil, as she threw her arms round her mother's neck and kissed her to conceal the tears that were welling up in her fine dark eyes.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PIXIES' HOLE.

On the following evening Sybil had set forth on an errand of charity to one of the many poor who blessed the bounteous hand of her mother—the widow of a fisherman who had perished during the pilchard season in the past summer—and she meant to return, as she stated, by the sea-shore.

Sybil had much cause for thought, and was somewhat disposed to linger on the way. The ample means enjoyed by her parents on the one hand, with the general seclusion of their lives on the other, and their studied avoidance of society when in England, had now given the girl much reason for reflection.

Her papa's mysterious absence too, and her mamma's nervous anxiety about American letters, were not without singularity; and why had both so sedulously abstained from all introduction to the family of the Trecarrels, who were greatly esteemed in the neighbourhood, and who were undoubtedly people of the best style? By the system of which this seemed merely a portion, she was even now

debarred from having properly presented to her this Mr. Audley Trevelyan, who seemed so well disposed to admire—perhaps, to love her.

"We have made but few acquaintances and, of course, still fewer friends at Porthellick," said Sybil, half aloud; "now why is it thus—to have means in plenty and so few to love us? What can be the reason? Mamma has some *secret;* but what can that secret be? Poor mamma—she looks so sweet always, and yet so sad at times!"

She would write to Denzil, she thought, on the subject of these mysteries; but Denzil was yet at sea, and it would be long, long, before she might receive his answer; and, then, there would be an awkwardness in their parents' reading, as they would certainly wish to do, his letters and perceiving the doubts she had suggested—the secrets she wished to probe. Perhaps when her papa, whose especial pet she was, returned, she might venture to give some hints, to make some inquiries; and as she saw the white sails of the shipping and the smoke of many a passing steamer, she lifted her eyes to heaven with an unuttered prayer in her heart, that she might soon again hear his voice and cast herself into his arms.

By one of those lanes peculiar to Cornwall, where the old road is sunk so deep in the ground and the bordering walls are so high that the surrounding

scenery is sometimes hidden, lanes where in summer the elms cast their leafy shadows, and the fragrant wild rose and honeysuckle mingle with the long tangles of the bramble, Sybil reached the shore and descended to the very margin of the sea.

It was one of those evenings which, even in the last days of autumn, come to the rocky and rugged duchy, when the atmosphere is so mild and balmy that one might think it was in the early weeks of spring, when the grey cliffs and purple moorland glisten in the yellow rays as the sunlight falls softly between the flying clouds, on land and sea; and the sparkling stream, that rolls from rock to rock on its passage to the shore, makes music in its plash as it falls from the cascade into the pool below, where the brown trout lurks in safety and unseen; and Sybil, as she wandered on, felt, she knew not why, an emotion of calm and contentment growing in her heart.

But in its serenity and beauty the evening was deceptive, and old fishermen on the heights, and other, weather-beaten salts who lingered, telescope in hand, on many a rude pier that jutted into the Bristol Channel, when looking seaward detected that which the landsman saw not—the tokens of a coming storm; for seamen have strange instincts peculiarly their own, and can read the sky like the pages of a mighty book.

Across the sea the sun, now setting, poured a steady stream of golden radiance, like a broad and glittering pathway from the far horizon to the very shore, by the margin of which Sybil was now lingering; and it tinted with warm light the flinty brow of many a storm-beaten headland, and those fantastic piles of grey granite which cap the hills in Cornwall, and are there called *carns*.

Seated on a fragment of rock, lulled by the regular and monotonous rolling of the surge, Sybil was immersed in thoughts of her absent father and brother, each now traversing the same sea, and yet so far apart upon its waters; she thought of Audley Trevelyan. Should she ever meet him in society as she wished to do? A little time and it might be too late, for Rose Trecarrel was so lovely, and already seemed to consider him as her own property; for it was by her side he sat in church, where they used the same books, and it was she that he usually shawled or cloaked first for the carriage; so if they were not already engaged, they might very soon be so.

Amid this reverie she was startled by a distant voice holloing, and apparently to her. She looked up, and on the summit of a cliff that overhung the shore, some two hundred feet or so above where she was seated, a man was gesticulating violently and beckoning to her.

Was he mad or tipsy? was her mamma ill; or what did this person mean? She listened intently and thought she heard her own name; he was evidently addressing her, and pointing to the sea. At last his voice distinctly reached her ear.

"Look out, Miss Devereaux,—the tide is coming in!".

She glanced hastily round her, and a chill struck upon her heart, for the fragment of granite on which she sat was almost environed by the encroaching sea, and the stripe of yellow sand, by which she had been walking at the base of the cliffs, was nearly covered by the surf, which was already chafing white and angrily about the rocky headlands which formed the horns of a little bay.

Heedless of wetting her feet, Sybil gathered her skirts in her hand and rushed shoreward, when a greater terror smote her heart as she looked around her. The man on the cliff had disappeared; no aid seemed nigh, and no living thing was visible save a solitary chough or red-legged crow, which was perched on a fragment of rock, from whence he eyed her in quiet security.

She was at a part of the coast where the land receded and the sea advanced between two headlands of granite, precipitous and sheer, but crowned by groves of ancient trees. The water, as yet, was smooth as a mill-pond within the bay, and reflected

in its glassy depths the coast that towered above it; while no sound came along the vast expanse of shore, save the hollow gurgle of the flowing tide, as it sought the recesses of the many caverns and fissures in the lower rocks. In the offing, however, the rising waves were edged with white, and this sign, together with the lowering sky and gathering clouds, showed that the coming night would be a rough one.

From the stripe of sandy beach, now nearly covered by the incoming sea, the only path lay round a little moss-grown slope at the base of an enormous rock, from whence it wound upward to the verge of a steep precipice and led to the deep old lane, already described. Over this mossy and angular ledge the angry tide had already rolled its spray, consequently it was too slippery for the foot-steps of the affrighted girl, who, after thrice approaching it, finally shrunk back, and ran, with wetted feet, towards the centre of the bay, keeping close to the sheer cliffs, against which the flowing sea was rising fast, and beginning to surge and boom, throwing masses of foam and froth over her whole person, while the scared seagulls and puffins whirled in flights around her.

Once or twice a wild shriek escaped Sybil; then her voice began to fail her, and she could only utter prayers that were earnest, deep, and piteous.

Wildly and despairingly she looked upward to the summits of the cliffs; they were impending and inaccessible, by their gloomy outline fully illustrating the influence and fury of what is called "the Atlantic drift," which is especially turned into the Bristol Channel, where the rocks, by the waves for ever heaving and rolling in mighty undulations, are worn into *concave* fronts, and form thus a hopeless barrier to the shipwrecked, and to all who might seek to ascend them.

She turned seaward with haggard eyes and wrung her poor little hands; not a boat was near, and nothing now was visible between the horns of the bay save the smoke of some distant steamer, hull-down below the horizon line, as she sped on her way to the coast of Ireland. The flowing tide was above Sybil's ankles now; she knew that at high water it would mount to several feet, and that ere long her drowned corse should be dashed and battered, at the sport of the waves, against those very rocks at which she glanced so despairingly!

The man who had seen from their summit and warned her—where was he now, and who was he? He knew her name, and yet had he abandoned her to her fate in that terrible place, with the sea and the darkness closing fast around her; for the sun had set and dun clouds were piled in stormy masses now, where so lately all was golden sheen.

Suddenly she bethought her of a cavern in the rocks known as the Pixies' Hole, which her brother Denzil had often explored—a gloomy place, the haunt at times of the seal and of the *zart*, as old Cornish folks called the sea-urchin. It was one of those great caverns in which, in the barbarous times of old, the Cornish men took shelter from the Romans and Saxons, just as the children of Israel did from the Midianites in the dens of the mountains; and there, by local superstition, still abode, unscared by the whistle of the adjacent railway, certain little beings known as the Pixies, who came hither from Devonshire on dark nights, mounted on the farmers' horses, and were heard to sing in its recesses while pounding their cider.

Gathering her skirts again, the poor girl dashed through the water, and ere long reaching the mouth of the cavern, clambered in breathlessly, falling, the while, more than once on her tender hands, when her feet slipped, on the glassy surface of the sea-weedy rocks and stones, which covered all the ascent to this gaunt and gloomy place of refuge.

She knew that it penetrated far inland, and hoped that there for a time she should be safe; but there would be hours of darkness, cold, and captivity to endure, ere the ebb of the tide would permit her to escape, and by that time what must be the terror of her poor mamma!

When fairly within this place her courage rose a little, for she saw that it closely resembled a grotto she had frequently visited and sketched—the Cave of Porthmellin. The floor of this great fissure in the rocks ascended at an angle from the shore, and as the tide advanced, Sybil found herself compelled to retire further and further still, inward and upward amid its dreary uncertainties, while the rising tide, now rolling into the bay with the full force of a west wind, began to surge with a sound as of thunder, about the mouth by which she had entered, and that orifice seemed to lessen rapidly as the water rose within it.

The roar of the sea woke a hundred weird echoes amid the impenetrable gloom beyond her; while the view outward from the point now attained by the breathless and affrighted girl, for a time proved strange and, to her artistic eye, full of wonderful effects. The walls of rock were dark, and yet so polished by time and the seas of ages as to emit reflected light, and to reveal little pools of crystal water lying still and motionless in fissures and crevices, where star-fish, shells, and hermit-crabs had been left by the last ebb-tide.

With growing terror Sybil could perceive that by each successive wave the mouth of her refuge grew smaller, and it was evident that ere long it would be covered by the sea, while she should be shut within!

A cry escaped her with this awful conviction; but she uttered no more, for the echoes of her voice came back to her strangely and with melancholy variations, as if from vast distances. If the cavern mouth were totally submerged, should she be suffocated; or if not, might she otherwise too surely die of cold, and lie there till some holiday explorer, or some boy in search of puffins' nests, found her remains? A cold current of air that swept past her from within the cavern warned her that it had an outlet somewhere; but it filled her soul with greater terror, for she remembered to have heard Denzil, old Derrick Braddon, and others say, that the Pixies' Hole terminated in the shaft of an old and long unused mine, down which she might fall and be dashed to a very pulp, if she ventured one foot further; for all was gloomy horror round her now; and as her knees yielded under her, and she sank upon them to pray, she felt the still rising tide flow over them as it had rolled completely above the rocky arch of the cave and submerged it!

Feeling the ground with her hands outspread, the unhappy girl continued to creep a few yards further in, and then she paused, for all that she knew to the contrary, on the very verge of the fatal mine!

One little while she was full of pious resignation to die, for she had lived an innocent and guiltless life. She drew from her bosom a locket and

fervently kissed it, as it contained the hair of her parents and Denzil—all she loved on earth. She knelt with her bowed head between her hands to shut out the horrid booming and sucking sounds of the sea in the lower part of the cave, and closing her eyes, as if the more to concentrate her thoughts, burst into passionate and vehement prayer.

Then anon the horror of death—and especially of *such* a death, amid gloom and darkness, unseen, unpitied, and unknown, would draw from her a piteous wail, that was lost amid the bellowing of the sea, for a storm of wind had now risen in the channel.

Of that newly-found admirer whom she had been learning to love, Audley Trevelyan, she had totally ceased to think; her heart was wholly occupied by thoughts of her papa, her mamma, her brother Denzil—all of whom she might never, never see more!

Dread of falling headlong down the shaft of the ancient mine, more than a thousand feet, perhaps, made her, we have said, pause breathlessly, and lie on the sloping floor of rock, listening to her watery death coming nearer and nearer with a gurgling sound, that, to her nervous and excited imagination, seemed like the chuckle of a destroying fiend! The dark *unspeakable* himself was alleged by the peasantry to frequent the oozy recess of the Pixies' Hole, and the bottom of the old shaft was

said, by the same veracious authorities, to be haunted by the unquiet spirits of ancient miners, who had perished there in the time of old.

Rapidly, yet terribly, through the mind of Sybil, then, as she fully believed herself to be, hovering on the verge of death, came back the eighteen years of her past life; at Como, in the old palace by the Arno; among the Apennines and the wild Abruzzi; Rome, Athens, and elsewhere, all passed before her like a rapid phantasmagoria—days and hours of happiness and pleasure. The faces and voices of her parents and her brother so beloved, came vividly amid those memories of their strange and aimless wandering in foreign lands. The secret of her mother—whatever it was—she should never learn now; but gleams of hope and the desire to live, mingled with the blackness of her despair, for existence seemed sweet, and she felt so young to die, when a long life should be before her.

At Porthellick she must long since have been missed, and her fancy pictured the agony of her lonely and tender mother; the wild, noisy grief of Winny Braddon, and the honest anxiety of those who might be fruitlessly seeking for her along the cliffs or through the bay by boats; seeking for her alive or dead.

All their search would be vain, for the tide was still rising, and now where she stood, not daring to

go further, the water flowed above her knees. A little time, a very little time more, and she should be lying drowned, the sport of the waves within the Pixies' Hole, or borne by them in their reflux, into the mighty waste of sea that washes the rugged shore of Cornwall.

A shrill cry escaped her as the water flowed to her waist; and gaspingly she felt with her hands for a little ledge of rock, up which she clambered, being in her terror endued by unnatural strength; and then, dripping and despairing, she felt a numbness come over all her faculties, which prevented her responding to certain strange sounds, somewhat like those of human voices mingled with the barking of a dog, now coming out of the *inner* gloom, while again a superstitious dread, the result of Winny Braddon's teaching, began to mingle with her more solid fears and sufferings.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE TIDE IN!

For a little space we shall return to the pretty villa of Porthellick, and to the anxious life of her who dwelt there; her thoughts ever with her absent son and husband. In this instance we put Denzil before his father, for the return of Richard Lord Lamorna, was looked for daily, but that of his son might be the event of years to come; so Denzil's last fond glance ere he left her, and his calm aspect as he lay asleep and all unconscious that she hovered near his pillow, were deeply impressed on his poor mother's heart; and now an eternity of waters rolled between them, for his ship, she knew, must be ploughing the wide Indian Ocean.

To the wayfarer along the coast-road towards the quaint village of Endellion (with its weather-beaten church, and the ivied ruins of Rhoscarrock), that white-walled villa with its rose covered peristyle buried among the pale-green drooping willows from which the locality takes its Cornish name, no better

example of peace, content and quiet could be given.

Yet the place was fated to be one of anxiety and sorrow.

Seated at a little buhl escritoire in her drawing-room, Constance was lingering over the last letter from her husband, after the removal of the tea equipage, and long after Sybil had set out on her charitable mission to the fisherman's widow.

"Richard is very long of returning, surely!" was her prevailing thought, as she sat with her graceful head resting on a white and dimpled hand, quite unconscious that the sun had set beyond the sea, and that the shades of evening were deepening around her.

No upbraiding thought of that absent husband entered the gentle heart of Constance; yet with all that heart's gentleness, she could not but think somewhat bitterly of the late Lord Lamorna, whose unreasonable prejudices and pride of birth and station, though only the result, the growth and maturity of centuries of time, and many generations of Trevelyans, had cost her years of anxiety, of unmerited seclusion and wandering in foreign lands under a name which was *not* that of her children's father, and thus keeping them in ignorance of their real family, its claims and rank—for the mystery

had been continued, even to the gazetting of Denzil, under the name of Devereaux!

The rising wind as a sudden gust swept through the grove of willows, roused her from these thoughts, and she found old Winny Braddon, hard-featured and keen-eyed, lingering near, with anxiety depicted in her face.

"The winter is setting in early, surely," said Constance; "we are not out of autumn yet, Winny, and see how dark the evening has become!"

"*En háv perkou gwâv*, my mother used to say, old Cornish for 'in summer, remember winter,'" replied Winny. "A sad night it will be for the poor fellows on board ship, ma'am, I fear."

"Do not say so, Winny!"

"The waves are rolling in fast, and breaking white as snow upon Tintagel Head, and all along Trebarreth Strand."

"And where is Miss Devereaux?"

"I know not, ma'am—only she has not returned."

"And she was to come by the shore!" exclaimed Constance, starting from her seat.

"The shore! do you mean the bit of sand that lies near the Pixies' Hole?"

"Yes—yes."

"The tide has long since been in—my God! oh mistress, our poor *chealveen* may be lost!" exclaimed

Winny, using the old endearing local word for 'child.'

Constance closed her escritoire with trembling hands, and went, in alarm, to the windows which faced the sea. The sun, we have said, had long since set, and athwart the dim and black and stormy clouds that now hid the point of his departure, a torrent of rain was falling aslant upon the dark and foam-flecked sea, and would ere long be drenching all the rocky shore. A little time and all should be darkness, and where was the absent Sybil?

Close-hauled, and running fast before the blast for shelter in Portquin Bay, a large boat, the last, perhaps, of the autumn pilchard fishers, careening wildly over amid the foam, was seen to vanish round a promontory.

A sudden access of terror now seized the heart of Constance. Instantly a mounted servant was dispatched to the hut of the widow, and the man soon came galloping back, with a scared visage and the tidings that Miss Devereaux had left her more than three hours ago, and had certainly descended to the beach, as she had been seen to do so. By this time, darkness had fairly set in; rain was falling fast upon the bleak coast, and "sowing wide the pathless main," while a heavy gale from thence was dashing a flood tide upon the shore, and the soul of Constance grew sick with apprehension.

"The tide in! oh my God—in what can I have offended Thee to be punished thus? My Sybil—my Sybil—is the cup of my bitterness to be filled to overflowing!" she exclaimed, in a low voice as she sank upon a sofa, while Winny Braddon wrung her hands, and in the noisy grief peculiar to her class, lamented, as already said, "the darling *chealveen*" she had nursed in her bosom.

Constance would have gone forth in person to search, bleak and rainy though the night; but she was too feeble and delicate to face the storm, nor would Nurse Braddon permit her. She sent all her servants, male and female, in search of the tidings she was terrified to hear; and ever and anon she rushed to the front portico and looked out upon the gloomy night, to where away beyond the willow groves that grew around the villa, the bleak high road wound seaward over a bare Cornish moor, towards those clumps of old trees that crowned the rocks which overlooked the fatal Pixies' Hole.

Slowly, as if each were an eternity of time, hour after hour passed now—periods filled up by agony and the pulsations of her heart; and ere long her watch told her that midnight was nigh.

Midnight, and her child still absent—her Sybil, the mistress of a thousand pretty, winning and affectionate ways!

Higher and more high rose the blustering wind,

sweeping before its angry breath the last brown leaves of autumn; wildly the willows seemed to lash the stormy air, as their supple branches were tossed on the stormy blast; and from a distance up the valley came the roaring of the sea, whose waves at the horizon were brightened occasionally by a ghastly glare of lightning. Between the scudding clouds, the moon's pale crescent was visible for a time, above the ruins of King Arthur's castle on steep Tintagel Head, a tremendous bluff (which is cleft by a chasm from the mainland) adding thus to the weird and wild aspect of the night; and what served to increase the distraction of the wretched mother, was the strange circumstance that of the several messengers she sent forth, not one had yet returned with tidings of any kind. Suspense thus became as it were, a bodily agony; she was led to anticipate the worst; and Winny Braddon though her heart was a prey to the keenest alarm and anxiety, had to use almost affectionate force to prevent her mistress, a weak and delicate little woman as she was, from sallying forth in her despair to prosecute the search in person.

Winny had but slender hope, she knew every foot of her native shore, and was old enough to remember many a dark and terrible story of the Cornish wreckers, and when many a keg of French brandy, and many a bale of good tobacco were brought from

the Scilly Isles, and without the knowledge of the Coast Guard, landed slyly in some quiet nook and cavern, where those to whom they were consigned knew well when to find them; she knew many who had perished in those secret places, when seeking for the hidden wares; and it was for being engaged in some of these little affairs, that her brother Derrick, had to "levant" from the duchy, and become a soldier in "the master's regiment—" the Cornish Light Infantry.

Alternately Constance lay in a species of stupor on a sofa, or started to the front door, where she listened with eager ears, the rain falling on her pale face, and the wind blowing about her hair, while she could see the lanterns of the searchers, glimmering like distant *ignes fatui*, as they proceeded to and fro along the heights that overhung the sea.

Denzil, she thought, was gone on life's highway, and might never return; their daughter drowned—their only child now it would seem, reft from them suddenly and cruelly! What would Richard say on his return, and how was she to meet his eye? What account was she to give of her maternal solicitude and of her stewardship? Yet in what way was she to blame?

Yes! she did accuse herself. The warnings and hints of Winny Braddon came to memory. She *had*

been remiss: she had permitted Sybil to wander too much abroad with her sketch-book, and this was the end of it; yet who, without some divine prescience, could have foreseen a catastrophe so terrible? How often had Denzil filled her mind with fear and anxiety by his exploits among those very rocks, and by his explorations of that horrible Pixies Hole, where, too probably, his sister had perished miserably; yet her bold and handsome Denzil, always came back in safety to kiss and laugh away her fears and upbraidings.

"Oh why is this terrible calamity put upon me?" she moaned, as she lay with her face covered by her hands, and her damp dishevelled hair; "is it but the forerunner of a greater—if a *greater* there can be? Can I have loved my husband and our children so much that I have forgotten to love my God!"

And for a moment or two, she actually turned over in her mind this strange idea—the first proposition of the Mystics, which was, that the love of the Supreme Being must be pure and disinterested; that is, exempt from all views of interest, all care of those we love on earth, and all hope of reward—tenets defended by Madame de Guyon, and advocated by the eloquent Fénélon.

A sudden knocking at the front door, and a violent pealing of the house-bell, caused her to start as if with an electric shock.

Tidings had come at last—tidings that might fill her soul with joy, or cause it to die within her.

"General Trecarrel, would speak with you ma'am," said Winny Braddon, hurrying in with fresh excitement in her tone and manner.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LOST.

THE stranger who had called to Sybil by name, and who had recognised her from the summit of the cliff, was no other than General Trecarrel, the same whom her parents had so studiously avoided; but who nevertheless knew her well by sight, having seen her on many occasions when riding abroad, and on Sundays at church, whither she always drove in her little pony phaeton, and he had always admired her beauty greatly.

The General was not a very old man; he was still looking for another command in India, and though in affluent circumstances was yet an enthusiastic soldier, who believed that military rank and stars and ribbons, were the only things in this world worth living for. He was nearly six feet in height—erect as a pike, and well built; his features were handsome, his eyes dark and keen; his complexion was well bronzed and dark, his short shorn hair was becoming grey and grizzled, and his

manner, by force of habit, and the air to command, was brief and authoritative.

He knew in a moment the great peril of the girl on the beach below him; he saw that already the tide was chafing in white surf at each horn of the bay, round either of which she could alone escape from the watery trap that enclosed her, unless taken off the shore by a boat. The General was on foot; that part of the coast was very lonely and no house or hut was near; but intent upon her rescue, he hurried away as fast as a limp in a wounded leg (he had received a ball at Ghuznee) would permit him, from place to place, in search of a boat; but neither boat nor fisherman could be found in time to take her off that perilous beach, ere the tide covered it.

The evening darkened quickly, and the stormy wind brought faster in the stormy sea. Near the gate-lodge of his own residence, he met Audley Trevelyan strolling leisurely in the avenue with his hands in his pockets, accompanied by his huge dog, and enjoying a cigar before the bell should ring to dress for dinner; but the havannah fairly dropped from his lips in his surprise on beholding the excited state of the usually calm and collected General Trecarrel.

"What's the row, General—what the deuce *is* the matter?" he asked.

"A dreadful thing will occur—if it has not already occurred—a poor girl on a solitary part of the beach yonder, has been cut off by the tide, and unless we can save her in ten minutes at farthest, all will be over—yes, in ten minutes!" added Trecarrel, looking at his gold watch—the gift of Sir John Keane, with whom he had served in the conquest of Cabul.

"Good Heavens, let us get a boat at once!"

"There is not one to be had—the pilchard fishers hereabout are all at sea!"

"Lower someone over the cliffs by a rope; I have gone myself, thus, for a chough's egg, more than once."

"The rocks are nearly two hundred feet in height in some places, and the poor girl——"

"Is she a lady, General?"

"Yes, and a handsome one, too."

"You know her then—she is not a stranger?"

"To me only—a Miss Devereaux, who resides at Porthellick."

"*Who* do you say?" shouted Audley; "Sybil Devereaux?"

"The same."

"Merciful Heavens, let us do something at once!"

"True, but without a boat what can be done?"

"She cannot, she must not, she *shall not* be left

to perish thus, if I can save her!" exclaimed Audley Trevelyan, with all the impetuosity of youth, and with sudden emotions of terror, pity, and tenderness combined. He, usually so calm, quiet, and apparently unimpressionable, to the surprise of the General, now rushed to the stable-yard, and loudly, even fiercely summoned grooms, gardeners, and lodge-keepers, and with these carrying poles and stable-lanterns, hurried towards the seashore, while two messengers were despatched to the hut of a fisherman, who lived about a mile distant, to get his boat, or at least a coil of stout ropes, and they succeeded in securing the latter; but his boat was at sea, and was the same which Constance had seen running round the headland for shelter at Portquin.

The alarm spread rapidly, and soon a dozen of men at least were searching along the verge of the cliffs in the dusk. The sea was seen rolling its waves round all the little bay now, and the base of the cliffs was marked by a curling line of snow-white foam alone. Every vestige of sandy beach had disappeared, and so had all trace of the poor loiterer whom the General had last seen there!

Many a "halloo" was uttered, but vainly, for no response came upwards from below.

Audley Trevelyan was very pale, and very silent, though deeply excited. He was not wont to indulge in self-examination, and consequently he never knew

until now how dear this girl was to him—in fact, how much he had begun to love her.

The dusk deepened into darkness, and a weird effect was given to the wild rock scenery by the fitful gleams of the lanterns carried along the edges of those perilous cliffs by the searchers, who felt that they were literally doing nothing, yet in the spirit of humanity were loth to relinquish their task, in which they were now joined by the terrified and excited servants from the villa. The wind was rising fast, and its mournful voice, as it swept through the bare branches of the old groves above the bay, mingled with the booming of the waves upon the rocks below.

Audley felt almost thankful for the gloom, as it hid the workings of his features, and like a thorough Englishman, he detested alike a scene and to be a subject for speculation; but now the deep baying of his Thibet dog among a clump of bushes and gorse, attracted the marked attention of the searchers.

"The dog has found some track or trace; he never barks thus, save for some cogent reason!" exclaimed Audley, as he hastened to the spot.

"Plaise sur, the dog do hear or see summat," added Michael Treherne, an old and decrepit miner, who in his earlier years had been an "underground captain" in Botallack mine, and one of the best

wrestlers in the duchy, and who had hobbled forth, staff in hand, to assist in the search; "if the dog be on the right road, we be on the wrang. But take 'ee care, surs; there's the shaft of a main old mine hereabouts; and out of it, in its time, there have come many a keenly lode o' tin and goodly bunch of copper."

"I know the place, Michael," cried Audley; "Heavens above! she must be in the Pixies' Hole, which, as you are all likely aware, opens into the shaft."

"Just so, Mr. Trevelyan; through that same hole, the water was pumped into the sea in my grandfeyther's time—and that warn't yesterday, sur."

"How old are you, Michael?" asked the General, lending the old man his hand.

"Seventy past; few miners live to my time, and 'tis ten years since I was underground," replied Treherne with a sigh; "I can mind o' 'ee a small booy, General, robbin' my garden o' apples."

Proceeding cautiously about a hundred yards back from the verge of the cliffs to the place where the dog was baying, they found amid the tangled gorse bushes, the mound of slag and other *débris*, now covered with rank grass and weeds, in the centre of which yawned the round mouth of the ancient mine; and as they drew near the dog

continued to bay the louder, with its forefeet outstretched, and its nose in the air. Then it began to fawn and leap upon its master, with such ponderous gambols, that more than once he was nearly thrown to the ground.

"Down, Rajah—down, sir! keep quiet, dog," he exclaimed, and while he spoke, something like the cry of a female came to his ear; "oh, General, I see it all now! She has been driven by the tide into the Pixies' hole, and is even now on the verge of this shaft; should she be ignorant of its existence, she may fall into the mine and be dead ere she reaches the bottom!"

"It must all be over with the poor lass, Mr. Trevelyan," said the old miner, shaking his head; "hear ye *that*."

And, as they listened, they could hear above the moaning of the wind and the surging of the sea, the sound of water pouring within the shaft of the mine, and falling apparently to a vast depth below. A sense of the deep profundity that yawned before them, made all save Audley and the old miner, Treherne, shrink, with faces that seemed pale in the fitful gleams of the lanterns, and now the latter spoke again.

"Aw dear, aw dear! dost hear, sur? The tide has risen to upper mouth o' the Pixies' Hole, and is now pouring down into the lower level o' the

mine, so if the poor lady beant drowned in one place, she will be at the bottom o' tother."

There seemed to be some probability of such being the case; and though Audley was horror-struck with the suggestion, he said with apparent calmness, the result of a great effort,—

"The upper mouth you speak of, Michael, is about fifty feet below where we stand; surely, the tide could never reach it, even at full flood?"

"But who will venture down to see?" asked Treherne, almost with a grin on his hard old visage.

"I shall!"

"You, Mr. Trevelyan—you, sur?"

"Yes."

"Dare you go down, Trevelyan, with that terrible sound in your ears?" asked the General, and all present murmured the same thing, save Sybil's servants, who moaned and wrung their hands.

"Dare I go down?" repeated Audley, "when a woman is in the case—a lady—Sybil Devereaux! To whom are you talking, General? Have I not for a joke taken a letter to the Devil's Post Office, and will I shrink for this?" he asked, referring to the deep and dangerous chasm at Kinance Cove, where the sea bellows for ever with a thundering sound, and from time to time hurls a column of water furiously through an aperture, when those

who are adventurous enough to descend in the dark and deliver a letter, as if to the presiding Genius of the place, will find it rudely torn from their fingers by an inward current of air, accompanying the reflux of the sea. "We have blocks and tackle with us," continued Audley; "rig them to poles laid across the shaft, and by Jove, I'll go down with a lantern; quick, my lads, for God's sake lose no time!"

"Are you not afraid of gas—or foul air, Trevelyan?" asked the General.

"I don't mean to go to the bottom."

"Of course not; but if the rope should break?"

"In that case, it won't matter what I meet with," was the grimly significant reply; "but be careful, my good fellows, for I trust my life to you in this instance."

"If the tackle did break, thee'd soon be in jowds" (*i.e.*, pieces), said Treherne, with a saturnine smile.

An oar and a stout pole, which two of the party carried, were laid across the mouth of the shaft.

A double-sheaved block was securely lashed to them; a strong rope was rove through the sheaves, and a species of cradle was formed for the adventurous Audley Trevelyan.

Long familiar with his native rocks, the latter when a bold boy, had clambered by Bodrigan's

Leap at Portmellin,* when seeking for puffins' nests, and could look without shrinking from the steeps of Gurnard's Head, Tol Pedn Penwith, and the fantastic cliffs of Tintagel. He had been doted on by the miners, with whom he had often descended the deepest shafts, clad like themselves in flannel shirt and trousers. Thus attired, he had explored the vast levels and silent galleries by the dim light of a feeble candle, while, as Sybil told of Denzil, he could hear the roar of the Atlantic over his head, and the boulders dashed by its force on the bluffs of the Land's End; and thence beyond, in levels half a mile out at sea, where the passing ships glided like silent phantoms many a fathom far above where he wandered.

Fearlessly he tied himself to the cradle which old Michael Treherne prepared for him; a lantern was hung at his neck, leaving his arms free, and now a dozen of strong and careful hands were laid on the ropes.

"Lower away, my lads," cried he, almost gaily; and with something like a gasp of anxiety in his

* So called from Sir Henry Bodrigan, who in the reign of Henry VII. sprang down the cliff, when flying from his neighbours Trevannion and Edgecumbe, who sought to capture or slay him. He was so little injured by the fall, that he reached a vessel sailing near the shore, and escaped to France. A mound, called the Castle Hill, and a farm-house, once part of a splendid mansion, are all that now remain of the abode of this fine old Cornish family.

throat, the General saw his young friend's face disappear as they lowered him into that awful orifice, the mouth of a shaft that went down a thousand feet and more.

"Steady, my booys!" cried old Treherne, in a species of glee.

Those who witnessed this descent were none of them, perhaps, very impressionable men; yet even to them, there was a gloomy horror in the idea of the vast profundity of the deserted mine, over which Trevelyan swung; and the wildness of the night, the storm at sea, the whistling and howling of the wind as it swept the rocky promontories, and rolled the waves in foam against them, were not without their due effects upon the mind.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SEARCH.

"He's a braave booy, sartainly!" said old Michael Treherne, admiringly, in his queer Cornish accent, "it is like him and like his family—the Trevelyans of Rhoscadzhel.

By Tre, Pol and Pen,
We know the Cornish men.

He'd face Tregeagle himself—lower away gently, lads. His ancestors existed hundreds of years ago; and for the matter o' that, I spose so did mine; we be all old Cornish *keth*."*

Audley Trevelyan would freely have risked his life to save anyone—of course a woman more than all; but how glorious was this! The peril he risked—for no ordinary amount of nerve was requisite for him who swung thus over the profundity of the ancient mine—was for his lovely little friend of the sketch-book; the Naiad of the moorland tarn

* People.

—she who seemed not indisposed to love him, and whose heart he might yet make his own.

"But Heaven!" thought he; "that impulsive little heart may be — alas—still enough by this time!"

And even as this disastrous fear occurred to him, the roar of the falling water was heard on the lower level of the empty mine, more than a thousand feet below him, while the lantern he carried cast strange gleams on the damp, slimy, and discoloured masonry of the shaft, after he left behind, or rather above him, the fringe of weeds and gorse, that grew about the mouth; yet in less than a minute he was assured that the water he heard falling, proceeded, not from the flow of the tide, as he and his companions foreboded, but from some subterranean spring falling into the shaft, far *below* the upper entrance of the Pixies' Hole; and anything more weird, dreary, and ghastly than that cavernous fissure which now opened off it on one side, and which he was preparing cautiously to explore, it would be difficult to conceive.

From its rocky and ragged mouth, which was covered with white and pendant stalactites and hideous fungi, on which the light of his lantern fell with fitful rays, its interior receded away into dark and gloomy blackness and uncertainty.

"Good Heaven!" muttered Audley, "the poor

girl cannot be here. Should she have fallen down the shaft!"—was his next terrible thought.

"Are ee saafe, sur?" cried Treherne, peering down from above.

"All right, old fellow—stop lowering and make fast the rope; I am just at the place, and a horrid one it is."

Ere he entered it, and cast off the cradle by which he had descended, he could hear in the obscurity beyond the surging or gurgling sound of the tide, at the lower end; and a nervous chill that he might find Sybil drowned, came over his heart.

"Well, by Jove!" he muttered; "of all the places in this world, to search for a young lady, who would think of this—down the shaft of a devilish old copper mine! I have seen some queer things in India, but this out-herods them all!"

Carrying the lantern so that its light should precede and guide his steps, he had barely gone twenty paces, when he discerned something white amid the dense gloom. Within but a few feet of the still encroaching water, a female figure was lying on a shelf of rock, from which she started into a half sitting posture, and gazed upward at him, with a wild and startled expression, in which hope and fear, joy and wonder, were singularly mingled.

She was that Sybil Devereaux of whom he was in search; her dress, a white piqué, all soiled, bedrabbled and wet, her fine dark hair dishevelled and sodden, her hat and veil gone, and her whole aspect forlorn and pitiable.

"I am saved!" she exclaimed in a wailing and excited voice; "I thank Heaven—I thank kind God that you are come to me; but how—and who are you that have had the courage——"

"Audley—Audley Trevelyan—don't you know me, Miss Devereaux?" said he, as he placed the lantern on a rock, and raised her tenderly in his arms.

"Oh Audley!" she exclaimed, and her head fell upon his shoulder, for she was weak as a child and past all exertion. She had never called him by his Christian name before, and while he felt his heart swell with a new emotion of pleasure, he ventured tenderly to kiss her cheek, and then he became aware how cold and chill it was. She seemed scarcely conscious of the act, though she said in a broken voice,

"Mamma—my poor mamma shall thank you, sir—I cannot speak my own thoughts—they are too terrible and my gratitude is too deep for words."

"From my soul, I thank Heaven, that I came in time to save you! A little longer here, my dearest girl, and you must have perished of cold!" said he as he perceived with genuine anxiety how pale she

was and how the whole of her delicate frame shivered, but his words or manner seemed to recall her energies, for she tried to smile and said,

"I shall have a strange story to write of to Denzil, and tell my papa when he returns."

"Have ee found her zur—is the young lady saafe?" cried a voice there was no mistaking, down the shaft.

"Safe and sound, Treherne," replied Trevelyan, whose voice made strange echoes in the cavernous recesses of the place; "we shall come up together, so take care my friends, for there will be a heavier strain on the rope—a double weight now. Permit me to lead you, Miss Devereaux—or, may I not call you Sybil?" he added, as his voice trembled a little.

"You may call me what you please," replied Sybil with something of her usual frankness, "I owe my life to you," she added feebly, while clinging to his arm.

"To me, after Rajah who guided us here, no doubt on hearing you cry for aid—so with the permission you accord, I shall call you Sybil—yes, dearest Sybil, permit me to blindfold you."

"Why?"

"You may become giddy—terrified."

"I submit myself to you," she answered, and he tied his handkerchief over her eyes, and while doing

so, to resist touching her lovely little lips with his own, was impossible.

"Pardon me for this, Sybil," said he, as the action brought a little colour to her pale cheek, "but I love you, love you dearly. Elsewhere, we shall talk of this—come, allow me to be your guide."

"Shall we not wait till the tide ebbs, and escape by the sands?" she asked, and shrinking as his arm encircled her.

"Dearest girl, you would die of cold ere that took place."

Thus from terror and despair on Sybil's part, and from a proud and joyous sense of exultation, on that of Trevelyan, there came about abruptly, a *dénouement* which might have been long of developing itself, even with those who were so young and enthusiastic, a declaration of love upon one hand, and a tacit acceptance of it on the other, for gratitude mastered the regard already formed in the heart of the girl.

Audley was now in that delightful state of the tender passion, when to see even the skirt, to hear the voice or to breathe the same atmosphere, with its object, had a charm; then how much greater was the joy of having her all to himself, and to feel that too probably, she owed her life to him!

"You do not—do not—love—" she faltered and paused.

"Whom?"

"Rose Trecarrel?"

"I love but you, and I bless God for the opportunity given me for testifying that love, by serving and saving you—Sybil—dear Sybil for so let me call you now and for ever."

"What the deuce *are* you about, Trevelyan? Do you mean to stay down there all night—or is the lady ill? That dreary hole can be neither romantic nor pleasant, I should fancy."

It was the voice of the General hailing him now.

"Here we come, sir," replied Audley, as he fastened the rope cradle securely round his body and courageously took Sybil in his arms. It was no doubt delightful to hold her in an embrace so close, and to feel her clinging to him, but a thrill of intense anxiety passed over all his nerves, and it seemed as if the hair of his head bristled up, when he found himself swinging at the end of a rope over that dreadful abyss, down which the lantern, as it chanced to fall from his hand, vanished as if into the bowels of the earth, for the lower level of that old mine, was far below the sea. As for poor Sybil, she felt only a terror that amounted to a species of torpor—a numbness of all sense.

"Now pull together, my booys!" cried the cheerful voice of Michael Trcherne, "one, two—one, two—*ho* and here they come out of the *knacked bal!*"

for so the Cornish miners designate an abandoned mine, as it is among his class, and in the mines, that words of the old language linger.

And in less than a minute, Audley and Sybil were at the surface and in the grasp of strong hands that placed them safely on terra firma, when, overcome by all she had endured, the former immediately fainted.

"The poor child is as wet as a *quilquin*" (a frog), said Treherne with commiseration.

"She requires instant attention," said the General kindly; "let her own servants take her at once to your cottage, Treherne, as it is the nearest place in this stormy night. See to this Audley, while I hurry down to Porthellick and relieve the anxiety of her mother. Give orders to have the carriage sent there for her. By the way, Audley, is not this the girl that Rose chaffs you about?"

"The same, sir," replied Trevelyan, whose heightened colour was unseen in the dark.

"How strange! Rose is such a quiz, you will never hear the end of this."

"She is the daughter of an officer—a Captain Devereaux."

"I have never met him—of what corps?"

"I don't know."

"To Mike's cottage with her, and lose no time. Here my lads, all of you go to Trevanion's Tavern,

and score to me what you drink. The night is rough and wet."

"Thank'ee sir," replied Treherne, while the others all bowed and scraped and pulled their forelocks; "my old woman 'll keep the young lady safe, till her pony-kittereen or your carriage comes for her; and we'll drink your health, and Mr. Trevelyan's too—aye, and the old Cornish toast of 'Fish, tin, and copper,' in summat better than Devonshire cider."

So, while Sybil in Audley's care was taken to the cottage of the old miner, and the latter with those who had joined in the search departed to enjoy the bounty of the General, the latter limped off to visit Constance and relate the story of her daughter's escape and safety.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### INTELLIGENCE AT LAST.

On seeing Constance without her bonnet, and with her dark hair somewhat in disorder, the first impression of the General was, how extremely like her daughter she proved, and how very youthful too; for her figure, as we have elsewhere said, was *petite;* her features were minute, beautiful and full of animation at all times, but never more so than now, when she started forward on the entrance of the visitor, with her delicate hands uplifted, her fine eyes sparkling through their tears, full of hope and inquiry, and her lips parted, showing the whiteness and faultless regularity of her teeth.

"You have news for me, General?" she faltered.

"Happily, good news, madam," said he, bowing low, "your daughter is safe and well."

"Oh, sir—oh, General Trecarrel, how can I thank you?"

"By composing yourself, my dear madam," he replied, leading her to a chair; but Constance became almost hysterical; she clasped his hand

in hers, and almost sought to kiss it, in expression of her deep gratitude, greatly to the confusion of the old soldier, who was Englishman enough to dislike a "scene."

"Under the circumstances, no apology is necessary for the abruptness of my visit," said he; "we are pretty near neighbours, and I hope shall ultimately be friends, though, singular to say, I have never had the pleasure of meeting Captain Devereaux."

These words recalled Constance to a sense—the ever-bitter sense—of the awkwardness of her position, and she faltered out—

"Captain Devereaux is absent at present—abroad indeed—but I hope he shall soon be home now. And our dear daughter—she escaped the rising tide——"

"By fortunately being able to find shelter in the Pixies' Hole, from which she was promptly rescued by a young friend—a brother-officer of mine."

"Oh, how I shall bless him and ever treasure his name."

"He is Mr. Audley Trevelyan, and has conveyed her, in the first place, to old Mike Treherne's cottage. She was drenched by rain and spray, suffering from chill, and overcome with terror."

"My poor little Sybil!"

The General did not add to the mother's alarm

by adding that he had left Sybil insensible, but only said—

"She should not return till to-morrow, when perhaps the rain may cease, and the storm abate; but I have ordered my carriage, and she shall have the use of it with pleasure. It must be here in a few minutes now."

Constance could only murmur her heartfelt thanks; but now, more than ever, she felt the peculiarity of her position—its extreme awkwardness, and its doubtful aspect. It was but a few weeks since her husband, now known as Lord Lamorna, had stood by the General's side at the late lord's grave, amid a crowd of bareheaded tenantry, and here they were talking of him as "Captain Devereaux!"

Sybil's cousin-german had saved and protected her, thus cementing the acquaintance begun by chance at the little lake upon the moor, and was with her now too, probably; he was her husband's nephew, and while that husband was absent, with her own rank, name, and his concealed, she dared not avow the relationship that existed among them all! Poor Constance felt her cheek grow paler, with the sickly thoughts that oppressed her heart, as she muttered under her breath—

"Patience yet a while, and, with God's help, dear Richard shall see me through all this!"

In a few words the General, with military brevity, related the whole affair of the evening; the providential discovery of her daughter in the chasm, by her voice, as it was rightly conjectured, having reached the ears of Audley's Thibet mastiff; but for which circumstance she must have perished of cold and exhaustion, or perhaps fallen down the shaft of the old mine and never been heard of again, her fate remaining a mystery to all—contingencies, the contemplation of which appalled the heart of the poor mother, who said in a very faint voice—

"My daughter is long in returning to me. Oh, sir, can it be that you are kindly concealing something from me?"

"Nay, madam, the tempestuous state of the weather and the feeble condition of the young lady herself require——"

"Ah, that is it! my daughter is ill—dying perhaps, while I am idly talking here. Winny—Winny Braddon, my bonnet and cloak; I shall set forth this instant for Treherne's cottage!"

"I assure you, madame, that my carriage was at her disposal, and it shall bring your daughter home."

"Oh, General, the gratitude of my heart——"

"There—there, please don't thank me for a little common humanity," continued the kind old soldier,

"but give my compliments—General Trecarrel's compliments—to Captain Devereaux when he returns, and say that I think he ought, in etiquette, to have waited upon me as his senior officer; for such was the fashion in my young days, when two brethren of the sword took up their quarters in a district so secluded as this; and I should like my girls to know your daughter."

"I have a son, too, General—my dear Denzil—who left us but lately to join his Regiment."

"Ah—indeed—you quite interest me. Where is it stationed?"

"In India—far, far from me."

"Of course, you could not have him always at your apron-strings. What, or which, is his corps?"

"The Cornish Light Infantry."

"My own Regiment! I am the full colonel of it: why did he not leave a card with me on appointment?—he must have known of my whereabouts."

A cloud came over the fair open countenance of Trecarrel, and Constance felt that, in the further prosecution of their systematic incognito, a breach of military etiquette and punctilio had taken place.

"My young friend Trevelyan is in the same corps," said the General, after a pause.

Constance knew that too, and that it had been the Regiment of her husband during their happiest days at Montreal; but when with it he had borne his family surname, and *not* that of Devereaux.

> "Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we practise to deceive!"

So thought Constance, and who could not quite foresee the end of the web. Her present perplexities were increasing, and her usually pale cheeks began to blush scarlet.

But now, to her intense relief, the sound of wheels and hoofs at the door, followed by quick steps in the entrance, announced an arrival, and in a moment more mother and daughter were weeping joyfully in each other's arms.

"Dearest mamma—darling mamma! Oh the joy of being safe with you again! An age seems to have elapsed since I left you this evening!"

And old Winny Braddon came in for her share of caresses, while the General and Trevelyan, though they now began to feel themselves rather *de trop*, looked on with smiles of pleasure. So full of joy was Constance at the restoration of Sybil, that she never noticed the quaint and coarse (though comfortably dry) costume which the careful wife of Treherne had substituted for her wet and sodden habiliments.

Audley's quick and practised eye saw that Constance was a woman possessing more than an ordinary share of beauty and refinement. He took in the whole details of the drawing-room, and perceived by a glance that the occupants of this secluded villa "in the willow-glen—those peculiar Devereaux," as the Trecarrel girls called them, were evidently people of the best and most cultivated taste, for the buhl or marquetterie tables, consoles, and cabinets exhibited selections from the most chaste productions of Dresden and Sèvres; delicate Venetian bronzes, quaint Majolica vases and groups, some relics from Herculaneum; and other objects (more familiar to him) from India and Burmah were there—four-armed gods and other idols in silver or ivory.

Pausing for a moment in her caresses, Constance turned towards Audley Trevelyan with a pleading glance of irresolution, yet one of wonderful sweetness.

"My young friend, Mr. Trevelyan," said the General; "allow me to introduce him, Mrs. Devereaux."

"Oh, sir, to you I owe the gratitude of a lifetime?" she exclaimed in an accent of touching tenderness.

He seemed so like her absent Denzil, that all her heart yearned to him, and in a genuine transport of

gratitude she embraced him with such *empressement*, that in a woman so young apparently for her maternal character, and so very handsome too, rather perplexed Trevelyan, who said,

"You owe me no thanks—indeed, indeed, you do not. I did but my duty—I obeyed only the dictates of humanity; and I assure you that you are quite as much indebted to Rajah as to me, Mrs. Devereaux."

The name he used recalled her to herself, and the peculiarity of her position as regarded *him*—the secret she could not yet reveal; and turning away as an expression of confusion come over her face, she stooped, and casting her arms round the great Thibet mastiff, caressed it with a grace and playfulness that partook of girlish glee.

By this time Sybil was reclining wearily, and with an air of utter exhaustion and languor, on a sofa. Her face was very pale, save when a kind of hectic flush passed over it, and her eyes seemed unnaturally bright. Even to the unpractised observation of the two gentlemen it was evident that they had better retire, and, after exchanging a glance suggestive of this, they both rose, hat in hand.

"You will, I hope, permit me to call to-morrow and make inquiries?" said Audley Trevelyan.

Constance bowed, and her tongue trembled: what she said she scarcely knew, but it was a

muttered wish of some kind, with many thanks and reference to her husband's return, all oddly combined. That she laboured under some species of hidden restraint was quite apparent to the perception of him she addressed, and also to the General; and so, after the usual well-bred wishes that both ladies should soon recover from the effects of their recent terror, they withdrew together; and as the sound of their carriage wheels died away in the willow avenue, all other sounds, and the light too, seemed to pass away from Sybil, as she sank gradually back, became insensible, and was conveyed to bed by Winny Braddon and her startled mother, who summoned medical aid without delay.

The next day found her in a species of nervous fever. She had undergone too much of mental fear and bodily suffering for a nature so delicate as hers, and remained for a time unconscious of all around her. Slowly and gradually, like water filtering through a rock—as some one describes the struggles of returning sensibility—she became aware that she was in her own bed, with her mother on one side and Winny Braddon on the other in watchful attendance; then, with a shudder, she would recall the horrors she had escaped, and clasp her hands as she had done ten years before, when a little child in prayer.

Then exhaustion would bring sleep, but a sleep

haunted by dreams, and, at times, visions wild as those of an opium-eater; thus, for many a night, long after this period, the episodes of that eventful evening would come back to memory with all their harrowing details: the advancing tide rolling against the impending cliffs and thundering in the Pixies' Hole, after it had swallowed the drenched sand; her retreating step by step fearfully and breathlessly before it, in terror of being drowned on one hand and of falling down the mine on the other!

Anon, she would imagine herself swung up that terrible shaft through darkness and space, and that the rope was just on the eve of *parting*, when she would wake with a half-stifled scream to find that she was in the arms of her mamma, who was soothing and caressing her.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE TRECARRELS.

Duly next day, at a proper visiting-hour, the handsome and well-appointed carriage of General Trecarrel, occupied only by his two daughters and Audley Trevelyan, was seen bowling down the avenue of the villa at Porthellick, with Rajah bounding before it in as much glee as if at home in Thibet, "the northern land of snow," where many a time he had scoured along the slopes of the Himalaya range and the Dwalaghiri in pursuit of the Cashmere goat and the Tartarian yak; but, as the event proved, the visit was in vain: the two ladies could only leave their cards, as they were informed that both Mrs. and Miss Devereaux were too much indisposed after the events of yesterday to receive visitors.

"It will be a case which warm drinks and cosseting will soon cure, I hope," said Rose, shrugging her pretty shoulders.

"Where to, Miss Trecarrel?" asked the footman, touching his hat ere he sprang to his place behind.

"To Bodmin," replied the elder sister: "we have shopping to do, Mr. Trevelyan;" and after a pause she added, "I have told you that they were odd people, those Devereaux; we were fools to come —don't you think so, Rose?"

"Perhaps, Mab."

"Do not judge so harshly," urged Audley. "What may be more probable than that both should feel excited after the last night's terror and—and——"

"Chivalry," suggested Rose Trecarrel, a little malice glittering in her fine eyes; but Audley remained silent.

Mabel and Rose Trecarrel were both eminently handsome girls. The elder was tall and showy, having dark grey eyes that filled, at times, with unusual lustre and had a wonderful variety of expression, but her chief beauties were perhaps her purity of complexion and the quantity and magnificence of her rich brown hair.

Rose was somewhat her counterpart—a large but very graceful girl, with clear, sparkling, hazel eyes, and hair much of the same hue, though her lashes and eyebrows were dark and well defined. Without attempting to describe her nose, we shall simply say it was a very pretty one, that seemed exactly to suit the expression of her eyes and the full-lipped yet little and alluring mouth below. Both girls were always dressed rather in the extreme of

the mode, and were sure to be prime favourites at all balls, races, or meets to see the hounds throw off; and no entertainment in that part of the duchy was deemed complete without "the Trecarrels." No friend had ever accused them of being flirts, though fair enemies had frequently done so.

The General was very proud of his two daughters, and felt certain that both would make most eligible and wealthy marriages, when he took them to India, where he was in expectation daily of obtaining an important command.

For the time Audley Trevelyan was, what others had been, and others yet might be, a kind of privileged dangler in attendance on both sisters, and seemed to share their smiles and return attention to both in a pretty equal manner; thus both were somewhat disposed to resent the new and sudden interest he manifested in Sybil Devereaux.

Both were eminently dashing girls. Mabel, the elder, was perhaps the statelier of the two, but the beauty and manner of Rose were more sparkling and dazzling. Both sisters were highly accomplished, and both had that affected indifference to their own attractions, which is perhaps an indication of the strongest and most ineradicable vanity—for of those attractions they knew the full power and value.

"But *who* are those Devereaux?" asked Mabel, as a turn of the road hid the villa, during a pause

filled up only by the subdued noise of the carriage wheels in their patent axle-boxes.

"*You* should know by this time, Trevelyan," added Rose, looking at him from under the long fringes of her eyes and her parasol, as she lay well back indolently yet gracefully among the soft cushions of the carriage.

"Nay; how should I, when you, who are neighbours, know nothing? Her father was a captain in some Line Regiment."

"*Her* father—of whom were we speaking?" asked Rose.

Trevelyan coloured perceptibly, and Mabel laughed.

"Oh, she occupies his thoughts already, Mab! He was of some Line Regiment, that is pretty vague, and scarcely suits our Cornish standard of such things as family and so forth—least of all the standard formed by your uncle, the late Lord Lamorna."

"Oh, he was an absurd old goose—mad with pride, in fact."

"And barely remembered you in his will?"

"Precisely so," replied Audley, half amused and half provoked.

"They visit no one, and they make no acquaintances," said Rose, resuming the theme.

"They settled here without an introduction, I

have heard, and gave it to be understood that they declined all acquaintance save with the Rector and Doctor."

"Neither of whom, Mab, are particular to a shade. I should not wonder, Audley, if your 'captain' were some returned convict or retired housebreaker in easy circumstances."

"Rose, you are too severe," urged Trevelyan; "Mrs. Devereaux is a kind of idol among the poor people here."

"We must all admit that she excels in chicken broth, is knowing in coals and tea, and great in corduroys, tobacco, and blankets; but fasten my bracelet, please," and she held forth coquettishly a slender wrist and a well-shaped hand, tightly cased in the finest of straw-coloured kid; and every movement of Rose Trecarrel, however quick and unstudied, was full of the poetry of action. "Thanks. If you will not admit that the mother of your fair friend is odd, you must that her father is so—or at least is ignorant of military etiquette, if he *is* a military man."

"How?"

"He has never left his card upon papa, which, in a solitary place like this, papa thinks he ought to have done, as it is the fashion in the service—going out I am aware—for the junior officer to wait upon the senior, though uninvited."

"Though a bore at times, it was a good old custom, I admit, but like many other fashions is as much gone out as square letter-paper, sand-boxes and sealing wax, stage coaches and queues."

"Then his son," she continued in an aggrieved tone, "on being appointed to papa's own Regiment, never had the politeness to leave a card upon us either!"

"Rose, you are quite a *Code Militaire*," said Trevelyan, laughing again. "Those Devereaux are thought handsome—I mean the mother and daughter."

"I have no wish to disparage the taste of the Cornish gentlemen——"

"None could afford to treat their taste with more indifference than you and Miss Trecarrel, who are both——"

"Both what?" asked Mabel, quickly.

"Above all comparison."

"Oh, we did not leave all our gallantry in the old coal-mine!"

"Excuse me, Rose," said Trevelyan, "it was originally a tin-mine."

"Pity it was not brass—eh, Audley?" replied Rose, laughing with a voice like a silver bell.

"Come, come, Rose," said Mabel, "you and Trevelyan are usually such good friends that I shall not have you to spar thus."

"We don't spar, it is only 'barrack-room chaff,' in which, as you may perceive, Mr. Trevelyan excels," retorted the piqued belle.

The truth was rather apparent to Audley, that the pretty—nay, the beautiful and hazel-eyed Rose was nettled, and seriously so. Hitherto she had considered the handsome ex-Lieutenant of Hussars, and now of the Cornish Light Infantry, as her own peculiar property—even more than her sister. He was to be her papa's Aide-de-camp in India—she had settled this, *nem. con.*; and while on leave at home, he was to be her dangler, secret slave, and open adorer—husband in the end perhaps, if nothing better "turned up;" for Audley's expectations from his father, the barrister, as one of a family of five, were slender enough; and here he was too probably smitten with a little chit-faced interloper whom no one knew anything about!

There was a pause in the conversation, during which the carriage had passed St. Teath and St. Kew, with their quaint churches, and that of Egloshayle, on the right bank of the Camel, where it peeped up among the trees, when Rose returned to the charge.

"And you actually swung together at the end of a rope."

"At the end of a rope, as you say."

"How romantic!—how charming!"

"At least in one sense; yet I was glad enough when it was all over in safety."

"What! though doubtless, as Byron says,

'The situation had its charm.'"

"Fie, Rose—you quote *Don Juan!*" exclaimed Mabel.

"And why should not I, Mab, if the passage seems so familiar to you?"

"Rose, you are incorrigible!"

"Well, Audley, your fellow-soldiers must be proud of you when they hear of this feat of arms."

"We say *brother*-soldiers in the service," replied Trevelyan.

"I submit to the correction; it is like one from papa, who deems all civilians stupid fellows. And so you think she is a paragon of loveliness?" continued Rose Trecarrel, so bent on the game of tormenting him, that she cared little for showing her hand.

"I did not say so—do you, Rose?"

"Call me *Miss* Rose, if you please," said she, with a charming air of pique on her lovely little lip.

"Well—where were we?"

"About the beauty of the girl you rescued—were slung in a rope with. How funny!" said Mabel.

"Of her beauty you can judge for yourselves; I have nothing to do with it," replied he wearily.

"Fortunate for you," laughed Rose, "as the girl's position in society seems so dubious, Audley."

"Call me Mr. Trevelyan, please, as we are to be on distant terms."

"Let us only have you in India, where we shall be ere long," said she, shaking her parasol threateningly, "and I shall have papa to put you under arrest."

"For what?"

"Conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

"As how, my fair friend?"

"Behaving rudely, petulantly, and insolently."

"To a pretty girl?"

"Yes—moreover, a daughter of the general on whose staff he is serving."

"And the sentence of the court will be, dismissal from her presence for ever."

"Have some mercy on him," said Mabel.

"You seem to know the duties of an aide-de-camp," said Audley, not ill-pleased to find himself an object of interest to two such handsome girls.

"Of papa's at least," said Rose: "to revise the dinner and visiting lists; to see Mab and me to and from all balls, kettle-drums, reviews, durbars, and so forth; to arrange picnics; to do all the squiring and shawling business, and to dance with us whenever we feel bored by some slow griff who can't keep time; to make bets of gloves, fans, and

bouquets, and to lose them so nicely and so opportunely, that the payment thereof appears a veritable glory; to see us through the crush of the supper, and procure ices, creams, chicken, champagne, and crackers, no matter how the thermometer may stand, or how weary the punkahwallah may be—all of which are among the duties of an accomplished staff-officer."

"Oh, Rose, how your tongue runs on!" said Mabel.

"Poor fellow, I must spare him, for his heart seems divided between the mother and daughter; so I hope that this Captain Devereaux may soon be home, lest evil happen. But here we are at Bodmin!" she added, as the carriage, after quitting the highlands of granite and dreary moorland which extend to within four miles of the ancient assize town, rolled through its centre street.

"And now, if you choose," said Mabel, "Trevelyan, you may enjoy the indispensable cigar while we investigate the industrial treasures of a country draper's shop. We have but one hour to spare, and then homeward."

"Or we shall have papa consulting that remarkable watch, which he got from Sir John Keane after the storming of Ghuznee," added Rose, as disdaining Audley's proffered hand, she sprang lightly from the carriage steps.

So, for a time he was left to "do" the lions of Bodmin, the handsome old Norman church, the few pointed arches and dilapidated walls of the Leper Hospital, and so forth; and to his own reflections and thoughts, which, heedless of the sharp banter he had undergone, were all of Sybil—at that very moment struggling back into perfect consciousness from feverish delirium, and stealing from Winny Braddon the visiting-card he had recently left, that she might conceal it under her pillow.

To her, he was fast becoming the realisation of all her day-dreams—"the one moving spirit that animated the whole world of her united romances." He was,

> "her first and passionate love, that all
> Which Eve hath left her daughters since her fall."

To Rose and to Mabel Trecarrel, he was simply one among the many "nice fellows" they had met with in society, and should meet again in plenty.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HE LOVES ME, TRULY!

To Audley's mind there was a freshness and innocence about Sybil, that made her image dwell in his heart prominently, and more vividly than the dashing and showy Mabel and Rose Trecarrel could have conceived to be possible. Moreover, there was, to him, something glorious in the conviction that for the sake of this lovely young girl he had confronted a manifest peril; that by doing so he had saved her and established—as he hoped—a tie of no ordinary strength and peculiarity between them, linking, in the future, their histories if not their lives together; for to him she owned now, most probably, the fact that she existed at all.

Such were the kind of thoughts to which Trevelyan, hitherto a heedless and pleasure-loving young subaltern of Hussars, indulged in many a dreamy hour, even when half flirting or "chaffing" with the Trecarrels, riding or driving abroad with them, turning the leaves at the piano while Rose displayed the perfection of her white shoulders and

taper arms after dinner, and dawdled languidly over the airs of Verdi and Balfe; and to which he fully abandoned himself, when he strolled forth alone, to enjoy a cigar in the lawn or in some secluded lane.

Sybil on her part deemed it equally delightful, to think that she owed her life to him; for had not Audley and others said (and she felt the truth of it) that, ere the ebb of the tide should have left the lower end of the cavern open and free, she must have perished of cold or terror, or both.

She had read the contents of many a box from "Mudie's," but no episode in any of the three volumes octavo therein seemed exactly to resemble hers in the Pixies' Hole. It was very romantic and strange, no doubt; but to Constance it appeared that the still concealed part of their relationship was the most strange and romantic feature in the affair.

Like most, if not all, young girls, she had read all about love in novels and romances; she had talked about love to school-companions, some of them enthusiastic Italian girls at Como, by the Arno, and elsewhere; and now a lover had actually come, one who on three successive days had left cards, with earnest inquiries concerning her health and that of her mamma.

She remembered the endearment of his manner

when he saved her, but feared, at times, that such might only have been caused by the peculiarity of their situation; and then she would blush with annoyance at herself, as she recalled the somewhat too pointed way in which she questioned him about Rose Trecarrel, to whom she was still a stranger, and of whom she had thus evinced a jealousy—actually a jealousy, as if thereby assuming a right to question his actions!

But had he not called her Sybil, and said that he loved her, and her only?

The afternoon of the fourth day saw Audley Trevelyan—always careful of his costume, on this occasion unusually so—passing slowly down the willow avenue towards the villa; and as he approached the latter, the beating of his heart quickened on perceiving the light figure of Sybil pass from the pillared portico into a conservatory that adjoined the house. So she was convalescent—had recovered at last; and now he would speak with her alone, and might resume perhaps the thread of that hurried but delightful topic, which was so suddenly cut short on the evening he saved her, by the voice of the impatient General.

He approached the glass door of the conservatory, which she had left invitingly open, his footsteps being completely muffled by the soft and close-clipped turf of the little lawn.

The conservatory was handsome, lofty, and spacious, floored with brilliantly coloured encaustic tiles, and constructed of iron, like a kiosk; its shelves were laden with delicate ferns, with cacti and gorgeous exotics in full bloom, though the season was in the last days of autumn, and over all drooped, almost from the roof to the ground, the far-stretching and slender green sprays of a graceful acacia. Under this stood Sybil, clad in a simple white dress, decorated by trimmings of rose-coloured satin ribbon, and having a dainty little lace collar round her slender neck; and Trevelyan watched her in silence and with admiration for half a minute ere he entered.

It was the freshness and girlish purity of Sybil that charmed him quite as much as the delicacy of her beauty. During his few years of military life, in London, at Bath, Brighton, and Canterbury, even at Calcutta, he had met many such girls as the Trecarrels—brilliant in flirtation and knowing in all manner of arts and graces; but none that resembled Sybil.

She had plucked a dwarf rose, and was about to place it in the breast of her dress. Suddenly she seemed to pause and change her intention; for a bright and fond smile spread over her soft little face, and while speaking to herself, leaf by leaf, she began to pluck the flower slowly to pieces.

She spoke aloud, but her voice was so low that it failed to reach the ears of Trevelyan, till after a time, when, as the leaves lessened in number, she began to raise her tones, and her occupation became plain to him. She was acting to herself—repeating the little part of Goethe's Marguerite in the garden, but in a fashion of her own.

"He loves me a little—tenderly—truly—he loves me not!"

With each pause in this floral formula, the old German mode of divination in love affairs, a pink leaf floated away or fell on her white dress; and when but seven remained round the calyx, she paused for a moment; her face brightened as the charm seemed to work satisfactorily; she resumed her plucking, and as the seventh or last leaf was twitched from the stem, she clasped her hands and exclaimed with joy—

"Truly—Audley loves me *truly!*"

Her colour deepened, and there was almost a divine expression about her eyes and lips; but she became covered with intense confusion when Trevelyan approached her suddenly, and said with a tender and pleasantly modulated voice—

"Your floral spell has worked to admiration, for Audley does love you truly and fondly, dearest [redacted]!"

"Mr. Trevelyan—and you have overheard

my folly!" was all she could falter out, as he captured her hands in his own, and she stooped her face aside.

"*Mr.* Trevelyan? Why, a moment ago you called me plain Audley, and it did sound so delightful! Pray do not let us go back in our relations. And you have quite recovered, I hope, from the effects of that frightful affair?" he added, while smiling with fondness into the clear bright eyes that drooped beneath his gaze.

"It seems as nothing, now—save when I dream; you make too much of it—indeed you do," blundered Sybil.

"Can I do so of aught in which you have a part?"

"Poor mamma is still in a weak and nervous state; so, I am sorry to say, she will be unable to see you."

As it was not "mamma" he had come exactly to visit, Audley could only murmur some well-bred expression of regret.

"How very remarkable that *you* should have been there to save me!" said Sybil, after a pause.

"The coldly treated stranger by the moorland tarn, eh?"

"You forget that we had not been introduced,—how came it all to pass?" she asked, with growing confusion.

"As all things in this life do, dearest Sybil."

"But how?"

"It was fate—destiny."

"What—are you a fatalist?"

"I hope not; and yet it were sweet to think that —that——"

"What?" murmured Sybil, her long lashes drooping beneath the ardour of his glance, while his clasp seemed to tighten on her slender fingers.

Much more passed that has been said, over and over again, under the same circumstances, by every pair of lovers since roses grew in Eden (and, unluckily, apples too); and there were long pauses, that were only pauses of the tongue, and which beatings of the heart filled up, with many a sigh "the deeper for suppression." There grew between these two a sudden sense of great trust which increased the tenderness of their sentiments, while deep gratitude was mingled now with Sybil's former budding love. It did seem to her, as if Fate had deliberately cast each in the path of the other; and doubtless it was so, for "out of these chance-affinities grow sometimes the passion of a life, and sometimes the disappointments that embitter existence."

"Oh, Audley, without mamma's consent, dare I accept so lovely a ring?" said Sybil, in a low voice, as she lingered at the conservatory door and contem-

plated a jewel which Trevelyan had just slipped upon her engaged finger.

"You will surely wear it for my sake, till—till—" he paused, and scarcely knew what to say, for he now began to reflect that he was only a subaltern, and had been "going the pace," in his love-making, with a vengeance! To fall in love and engage oneself were easy enough; but, as yet, he did not quite see the end of the affair. Sybil was, moreover, the daughter of an officer whose temper, perhaps, might not brook trifling.

"Oh, it is an exquisite diamond!" resumed the girl, the pause unnoticed, and its cause, to her, unknown.

"It formed one of the eyes of Vishnu, a Hindoo idol, in a temple near Agra. One of the Cornish Light Infantry—old Mike Treherne, the miner's son—poked out both with his bayonet. Jack Delamere bought one; I the other, and had it set thus in a ring by a Parsee jeweller in the Chandney Choke, at a time when I little thought of having in mine so dear a hand to place it on. Has not our acquaintance ripened with wonderful rapidity, darling?"

"Under such terrible circumstances, I don't wonder at it," said she, smiling tenderly as she toyed with the ring, which was now enhanced in value—priceless in her eyes, for it was a love-token.

A love-token! and what might be its future history, and what their fate? "Customs alter, and fashions change," says a writer; "but love-gifts never grow old-fashioned or out of date,—they are always fresh from the golden age. Old people die, and desks and drawers are ransacked by their heirs. Oh, take up tenderly the withered petals, the lock of hair, the quaint ring hidden away in some secret recess; for hearts have once thrilled and eyes moistened at their touch. Precious gems and rare objects there may be in casket and cabinet; but none preserved with such jealous care as *these*, for they were the gifts of love."

Sybil was a thoughtful girl, and even in that happy hour a sadness stole through her heart, as some such ideas occurred to her; but the young officer thought only of the present time, of its joy and of her beauty.

He pressed her to name a day when she and her mamma, as by courtesy bound, would return the visit of the Trecarrels; but, ere that could be accomplished, there came to pass that "greater sorrow" which the heart of Constance had foreboded, and which must be duly recorded in its place; so the hoped-for visit was never paid.

On this evening, Audley lingered long with Sybil. Each had so much to say to the other, and so many questions to ask, and so many fond plans for the

future, that parting was a difficult task, even with the knowledge that they were to meet again on the morrow.

It came; and noon saw him again at the villa, where he was received in the drawing-room by Constance *alone;* and to her he began to speak of Sybil after a time, and to express his admiration and regard for her.

This Constance had fully foreseen and expected; but she was outwardly, to all appearance, collected and calm, till the *secret* that oppressed her became too much for her nervous system. Thus, the tenor of her bearing, which before had been all kindness and gratitude, suddenly changed. She became cold and constrained, perplexed and even awkward; so that a chill fell upon the heart of Audley, whose nature, all unlike that of his father, was frank and generous to a fault. She curtly but gently told him, that until the return of her husband she could afford no permission for her daughter to receive addresses; and soon after, full of deep mortification, and dreading he knew not what, Audley Trevelyan took his leave; and Constance, as she watched his figure pass out of the avenue, burst into tears.

Sybil, as her youngest-born, she had ever looked upon as a species of child—called "*the* baby," when long past babyhood; and now Sybil had a lover! Awakened to the reality of this, the poor lonely

mother regarded this new phase of her daughter's existence with a species of alarm that bordered on terror.

"Would that Richard were home!" was her first thought; "even Denzil's advice would be something to me now, poor boy!"

Audley had barely entered the Trecarrels' drawing-room, when Rose, who was reclining on a fauteuil, with her rich brown hair beautifully dressed by the hands of her Ayah, and who fancied herself immersed in a novel, tossed it aside, for her clear hazel eyes speedily detected the disturbed expression of his face, and proceeded forthwith to quiz him as usual about "the Devereaux girl," and his intentions in that quarter; while Mabel, who was seated at the piano, sang laughingly a verse of "Wanted, a Wife," then a popular song, altering certain words "to suit the occasion," as Rose said—

"As to fortune—of course, I have but my pay,
A sub with seven-and-sixpence a day,
And a pension beside—rather small, 'tis confest,
For a leg shot away in the action 'off Brest;'
For the loss of three fingers in fighting a chase,
And a terrible cut from a sword in my face.
But with all these defects, my nerves I must string,
To propose for Miss Devereaux—delicate thing!"

Audley felt almost inclined to quarrel with his fair friends.

"Don't tease a fellow so, Rose," said he, wearily; "I have no money—at least, little beyond my pay; and have as much idea of marrying as—as——"

"I have, perhaps."

"I cannot say that."

"You could ask this Sybil Devereaux?"

"Of course—it would be easy as cribbage."

"And what would she say, think you?"

"As a sensible girl such as she seems to be—'wait.'"

"Which means, that she would take you in time to come?"

"Perhaps."

"Unless something better turned up."

"Don't judge of her by yourself, Rose," he retorted, laughing, to conceal his annoyance, which was greatly increased when the General's butler, just as Audley was ascending to his own room to dress for dinner, handed him a letter on a silver salver.

It was from his father; written in his usual clear and precise hand. Audley for a time left it on the toilette table; then he tore it open, with an air of irritation, as these paternal missives were rarely pleasant ones, being always filled with advice, varied by reprehension.

"Fathers have flinty hearts—and, by Jove, here

is one!" muttered Audley, while his brows contracted.

"I have seen in the public prints," ran the letter, "all about your adventure with the daughter of those strange people who live at Porthellick. The woman Devereaux is, as her name imports, too probably some designing French adventuress. Mabel Trecarrel has written to your sister Gartha, that you are quite smitten with the daughter; but I give you my distinct advice and notice to take heed of what you are about, and to join us in London without delay. You left the Hussars, even in India, because of the expense of the corps, neither tentage nor loot" (loot! the governor means batta) "being sufficient to maintain you. Disobey me in the matter of this girl Devereaux, and *I shall cut off* even the slender allowance I promised you, for the Cornish Light Infantry."

Audley crushed up the letter in his hand, for it came, at that particular moment, like a sentence of death.

And Downie Trevelyan could write thus of the loving and amiable little family circle at the villa, knowing all he did, and suspecting more!

To fear, or to find that his brother Richard, so long deemed an eccentric bachelor, had a family ready made and at hand to succeed him in the honours of Rhoscadzhel and Lamorna was bad

enough. These interlopers who came between his own family and the line of Trevelyan might (perhaps) be set aside; but to find that his eldest son had become entangled with one of those so-called Devereaux, proved too much for the equanimity of the far-seeing lawyer.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE GREATER SORROW.

At the very time when Mabel Trecarrel was singing to tease Audley, Sybil was beginning a song of a very different character and calibre to soothe or amuse her mamma. It was a grand old Hungarian ballad, with an accompaniment like a crash of trumpets at times; and was one she had picked up during their wanderings on the banks of the Danube; but she had only got the length of the first two verses, when her mother's tears arrested her.

"Was it the vine with clusters bright
That clung round Buda's stateliest tower?
No, 'twas a lady fair and white,
Who hung around an armed knight;
It was their sad, their parting hour.

"They had been wedded in their youth,
Together they had spent life's bloom;
That hearts so long entwined by truth
Asunder should be torn in ruth—
It was a cruel and boding doom!"

"Oh cease, Sybil," said Constance; "cease; it was your papa's favourite."

"Then why cease, mamma?"

"He is not here, and I feel I know not what—a foreboding—a superstition of the heart."

So Sybil closed her piano, and it was long, long ere she opened it again.

Three weeks had now elapsed since the Montreal steamer *Admiral* (his anticipated departure by which Richard Trevelyan fully notified to Constance) had been due at Blackwall, and yet there were no tidings of her, so insurances went up, and underwriters looked grave. No Atlantic cables had been laid as yet between Britain and America, though such things were talked of as being barely possible. The *next* steamer announced that the *Admiral* had duly sailed at her stated time; so, save the letter which contained the pleasant odds and ends concerning Montreal and their early lover days, poor Constance saw her husband's writing no more.

Her surmises were endless, and the worthy rector lent his inventive aid to add to them. Might not the ship have met with some accident to her engines, and put back slowly under canvas to Montreal, the Azores, or elsewhere?

Lost—was the word that hovered on her lips and trembled in her heart—LOST! Oh, that was not to be thought of. Yet if it were so, some must have survived to tell the terrible story; some might have been picked up, famished and weary, by a passing

ship, and taken perhaps to a distant region, Heaven alone knew where. Such events happened every day on the mighty world of waters; so as week succeeded week, the familiarity with suspense, sorrow and horror seemed to become greater; till ideas began to confirm themselves, and probabilities to be steadily faced, that she would have shrunk from in utter woe but a month before!

Then came those cruel and shadowy rumours, by which the public are usually tantalised, and the relatives of the missing are tortured—stories of wrecks passed, steamers abandoned—the masts gone, funnel standing, and so forth, in this, that or the other latitude; but all vague and never verified. How many stately ships have perished at sea, of which such stories have been told! In those days, it was the *President*, the great, "the lost Atlantic steamer," on the fate of which at least one novel and several dramas and songs have been written; and but lately it was the turret ship *Captain*, with her five hundred picked British seamen, that went down into the deep, a few loose spars alone remaining to tell of their sorrowful fate.

Constance and her daughter were inspired by successive hope that he might have survived, and fear that he had perished—too surely perished; and these alternations were agony, for "the promises of Hope are sweeter than roses in the bud, and far

more flattering to expectation; but the threatenings of Fear are a terror to the heart."

At last there came a fatal day, when a passage cut from a London newspaper was enclosed to Constance by Audley Trevelyan, who had been constrained to visit and remain in town with his family.

It contained distinct details of the total wreck of the *Admiral*, which had foundered in a gale. She had been heavily pooped by successive seas, and had gone down with all on board, save the watch on deck, who had effected their escape in one of the quarter-boats, and been picked up in a most exhausted state, by one of Her Majesty's ships. All the passengers had been drowned in their cabins, and to this account a list of their names was appended.

"It is very remarkable, my dear madam," wrote the unconscious Audley, "that I do not find the name of Captain Devereaux borne in this list; though we have all the sorrow to see that of my uncle Richard, Lord Lamorna, whose American trip has been to us all a source of mystery."

Constance read the printed list with staring stony eyes, and a heart that stood still!

Mr. Downie Trevelyan had perused it carefully too, with the aid of his gold double-eye-glass, and an unfathomable smile had spread over his sleek legal visage while he did so.

"Oh, my husband—my Richard—so innocent and true! Gone—gone, and your children and I are left—doomed to shame and sorrow—doomed—doomed!" wailed Constance in a piercing voice, as with her fingers interlaced across her face she cast herself upon a sofa in despair.

"Mamma," urged the terrified Sybil, "what *do* you mean? Does not dear Audley write that papa's name is *not* in the list; so he cannot have sailed in that unhappy ship."

"My poor child, you know not what you say," moaned Constance, without looking or altering her position, for dark and bitter was the desolation of the heart which fell on her.

In vain did poor Sybil caress and hang over her in utter bewilderment, and read and re-read Audley's letter without being able to comprehend the agitation of her mother, who answered nothing. For the time she was overwhelmed by the immensity of their calamity—by gloom and speechless sorrow.

But one thought was ever present—there was a face she should never more behold—a voice she never more should hear; the great ship going down in the dark; "the passengers drowned in their cabins," by the furious midnight sea; and he who loved her so well, who had crossed the Atlantic to bring back the full and legal proofs of their nuptials, was now in the shadowy land—the Promised

Land—where there are neither marriages nor giving in marriage; and where there can be no graves either in the soil or in the sea.

With this calamity must many others come!

Richard's means died with him; the proofs of her marriage and of her children's position had perished with him too. Even the newspapers in their notices of the event, were careful to record that "as Lord Lamorna (who had so lately succeeded to that ancient title) died a bachelor, he would be heired by his brother, the eminent barrister, Mr. Downie Trevelyan, now twelfth Lord Lamorna of Rhoscadzel, in the duchy of Cornwall."

There was the usual obituary notice in a popular illustrated paper, with a wood-cut of the late lord's arms, the demi-horse *argent* issuing from the sea, the coronet, the wild cat, and the motto *Le jour viendra.*

Even Derrick Braddon's name was recorded as among the list of the drowned; so the sole surviving witness of the hasty and secret marriage had perished with his master.

Sybil had answered Audley's letter—Constance was quite incapable of doing so—urging him piteously, for the love he bore her, to make what other inquiries he could at Lloyd's, the shipping offices and elsewhere, as her mamma seemed to be distracted; and promptly a reply came, but not in

Audley's handwriting, though it bore the London post-mark. It was addressed to her mamma, who in a weak and breathless voice desired her to read it; and great were the terror and perplexity of the girl, when she perused the following sentence—for one contained the whole matter.

"CHAMBERS, TEMPLE.

"MADAM,

"A letter written by your daughter and bearing the Porthellick postmark, has just fallen into my hands; so I hereby beg to intimate to you that my eldest son and heir, the Hon. Mr. Audley Trevelyan, can hold no such intercourse as that document would seem to import, or be on such terms of intimacy with a young woman who is destitute of position, who has not a shilling in the world, and whose parentage, family, and so forth—you cannot fail to understand me—are matters of such extreme uncertainty, not to say worse; thus you must endeavour to control her actions, as I shall those of my son, who goes at once to join his regiment in India.

"I am yours, &c.

"LAMORNA.

"A copy kept."

"How dare this Lord Lamorna write to you thus,

mamma?" asked Sybil, her dark eyes flashing with unusual light; but the pale mother answered only with her tears, and recalling now certain broken sentences which had escaped her—sentences that seemed somewhat to correspond painfully with the insulting tenor of the letter. Sybil, after the first hours of excessive grief were past, said in a composed voice, yet with tremulous lips,

"What does Lord Lamorna mean? *Who* are we, mamma? and what are we?"

Constance was silent, though each pulsation of her heart was a veritable pang.

"Are we not Devereaux?"

"No."

"Who then?" urged Sybil, her pallor increasing while the silence or pause that ensued was painful to both; to none more than the innocent mother, the guarded secret of whose blameless life was now about to be laid bare before her own child—a secret that seemed now to assume the magnitude of a crime! All the care, doubt, anxiety, and mystery of the past years had gone for nothing, and the sacrifice she had made of herself, was now likely to recoil fearfully upon her, and more than all upon her children.

In broken accents, with her aching head reclined on Sybil's breast, she told all that the reader already knows; the insane pride of birth and family which

inspired the old lord, his suspicions and threats, the long necessity for consequent secrecy; and Sybil heard all this strange story with intense bewilderment.

Could she realise it—take it all into her comprehension? Her mother was a lady of title—her brother Denzil was the real Lord Lamorna, she herself was not a Devereaux, but a Trevelyan like Audley—and he, Audley, who loved her so, was her own cousin!

This revelation then explained all to Sybil; all of their wanderings in strange places, and sudden departures from them, when unwelcome tourists who might have recognised Richard Trevelyan came, their secluded life at Porthellick, their marked avoidance of the Trecarrels and others, and on the whole poor Sybil felt cut to the heart, and inspired by not an atom of pride; yet she tenderly and fondly embraced her mother with greater fervour than ever, for more than ever did she feel that she must love her now.

"My poor papa drowned—drowned, unburied in the sea—passing away from us without even the name by which we have known and loved him!" exclaimed Sybil. "Oh why is God so cruel to us?"

"Alas, Sybil, we can but adore the decrees of Heaven, without seeking to know more of them. This stroke is hard to bear, child—all the harder

that I have reason to fear—to dread, oh, my God, that more than your papa's life has perished with him."

"More mamma; what can be more?"

"That which was dearer to him than life; the succession of Denzil—the honour of us all!"

After a long pause, with a vague expression in her eyes, as if her thoughts were travelling back into the years of the past, Sybil said,

"I had begun to suspect there was some unpleasant mystery about us."

"But affection and delicacy——"

"Both, dearest mamma sealed my lips and I was silent; but oh, to what good end or purpose has it all been? By this, too surely is Audley also lost to me."

"My poor child, he was your lover, and through me you think you lose him. Oh pardon me, Sybil, darling, for I, your hapless mother, am the cause of all this! Had your papa never seen, or known, or loved me——"

"Do not say so, mamma dear," whispered Sybil as her mother's tremulous lips were pressed on her throbbing brow.

"It was a plan your papa formed to save his inheritance for you and Denzil, and already his brother claims all."

"It was a false plan, and see how it may fail us—nay already, to all appearance has failed us."

"He is in his grave—if indeed the ocean can be called a grave."

"True, my darling papa—and I must not upbraid him, even in thought."

"If it is the will of God that I should suffer, His will be done! But my children—my children!" cried the widow wildly, and she raised her hands and her dark and beautiful but bloodshot eyes to Heaven; "my brave and handsome Denzil, and my soft sweet Sybil, of what have they been guilty, that shame and ruin, should fall on them?"

"Mamma," whispered Sybil, embracing her closely, "we must learn to bear with resignation the woes we cannot help. But oh," added the girl in her heart, "how am I to write to Denzil of all this 'sorrow, and probably worse than sorrow and poverty?"

## CHAPTER XX.

### A FAMILY GROUP.

And so he was gone—this tender husband, who had loved her so dearly, and whose secret she had shared so unavailingly for years; and apart from the horror of the doubt that hung over the future of her children, whose means and honour, like her own, had too probably perished with him, a despair grew in the heart of Constance when she surveyed the familiar objects, the little household gods of their once happy home, and thought upon the days that could never, never come again.

There were times when she could not believe that she had lost him; that her sorrow was a painful dream from which she must awake. She perpetually found herself softly whispering his name, especially in the waking hours of the night. Thus too, from overtension of the nervous system, she would start at the fancied sound of her own name, uttered as if by his voice at a vast distance.

In the delicacy and tenderness of Constance, there was an amount of keenness and intensity

possessed by few, and thus her heart bled for her daughter, rather than for her own dubious position, the fact of which had been so coarsely thrust upon her by the insolent letter of Downie Trevelyan, who was now formally spoken of and everywhere announced and received as "Lord Lamorna."

That Sybil had given all the wealth of her young heart to this man's son, was but too evident to her anxious mother's observation; but how would matters tend now, and could that misplaced love have a successful termination?

Days were passing in sorrow now; no letters from Audley came to either. Sybil looked delicate and grew pale and thin, for a double grief was consuming her, and Constance began to marvel in her heart, was she meant to live in suffering and penury, perhaps to die early, this child—her dead father's idol, so loved and petted by him.

Sybil felt secretly pleased with the idea that there existed between her and Audley a tie—the tie of blood—which even the antagonism of his crafty father could not break. "The idea of cousinly intimacy to girls is undoubtedly pleasant," says Anthony Trollope; "and I do not know whether it is not the fact, that the better and the purer the girl, the sweeter and the pleasanter is the idea."

How often had Constance asked of herself—but

never of him who was gone—"How long is this deception to be carried on? How long am I to wait before I take my place in the world as the wife of Richard Trevelyan, and cease to figure as a sham Devereaux, and how long are our children to be thus under a cloud?" All obstacles were removed now, but the sham was becoming a reality, and the cloud was growing darker than ever.

And was her poor Denzil, then so far away from her, to be tamely robbed of his noble inheritance after all?

The necessity for action in some way, even before acquainting him with his father's death and real rank, compelled Constance to bestir herself. She knew no one whom she felt tempted to consult with confidence, and was totally ignorant of the line of action to adopt, but on hearing, before a week had passed, that the whole family of the Trevelyans had come from town and taken up their residence at Rhoscadzhel, she resolved to lose no time in confronting the usurper personally, attended only by her daughter. She could—she feared not—fully prove the identity of "Captain Devereaux" with Captain Trevelyan the late lord, and her husband's miniature, which she wore, and his letters, especially the last from Montreal, would prove still further the fact of her marriage, and his intentions as regarded his will, though they were all addressed to

her as Mrs. Devereaux, and simply bore his signature as "Richard," save one already mentioned, to which he appended his title.

So she thought and flattered herself while, clad in the deepest mourning, she and Sybil traversed, by the Cornwall Railway, the forty odd miles that lay between Porthellick and Rhoscadzhel, followed by the prayers and blessings of old Winny Braddon.

"That which we fancy must break our hearts, we can bear patiently, and what is more, so learn to conform to, that after a few years of life, we can wonder that we thought them hardships," says a writer with much truth. So did Constance think her heart would break, when all the reality of her desolate condition was brought home to her, by her mirror reflecting her face—the face that Richard loved so well—encircled by a widow's cap—that odious ruche of tulle; but she already felt the conviction strongly, that whatever happened now, she would not have many years of life before her.

Mother and daughter sat silent and sad while the train swept on, Lostwithiel with its antique octagon spire and the ruins of Restormal, with their moat full of sweet-briars; St. Blazey, to whose shrine the woolcombers made their pilgrimages in the days of old (the saint having been tortured or curried

to death with wool-combs, by the Cornish men who declined to be converted from Druidism), with many a spacious lawn and bare autumnal wood and many a purple moor, were speedily left behind; and now it was past Grampound with its market-house and ancient granite cross, the train went screaming and clanking. Redruth next, in a dreary and barren district whose wealth lies far below the soil, which is literally honeycombed by the shafts and levels of mines; and then came Hayle, the houses of which are all built of scoria or slag, the débris of ancient mines; and then the travellers hired at the "White Hart," a carriage for Rhoscadzhel.

To Constance, the scenery there had its chief interest in the circumstance that in youth and manhood her husband must have been familiar with every feature of it, and must have shot and hunted over it all. Noon was past now; but the sun shed a rich golden light upon a calm sea, of which they had lovely glimpses at times between the grey granite *carns* and clumps of oak and elm. Sometimes the carriage rolled past wildernesses of rock and morass, where wild tarns reflected in their glassy depths the blue sky above, and where valleys opened westward to the Bristol Channel, whose waves were buttressed out by precipices of bold and striking outline; and the heart of Constance began to beat painfully as each revolution of the wheels drew her

nearer and nearer to the house, that long ere this should have been her home.

She felt, or thought, that now she was about to face, confront, and grapple with her fate, and to know the best or worst! The secret burden so long intolerable, would now be cast aside, and the adoption of any line of action, in lieu of the existence she had led since her loss was confirmed—the dumb mechanical life of one too paralysed even to think—was a relief. Yet moments there were when she half repented of her journey.

Her husband, her sole protector, was gone, and the proofs of their marriage, and of his intentions by will, too, were gone also! If her arguments were repelled, her assertions denied, what must be her fate, and how terribly should she and those he loved so well be exposed to the sneers and heartlessness of a world that knew nothing of their good qualities, or of the cause for that concealment which might now prove the cause of their destruction.

What if even now, at the eleventh hour, as it were, she turned prudently back, and concealed the fact that she was the true Lady Lamorna—that her son was a peer of the realm—and let him and Sybil pass through life as humble Devereaux, content to earn their bread as best they could? But to see Downie Trevelyan, the author of that harsh and most insult-

ing letter, occupying the place of her Denzil—no—no! a thousand times no!

Some such fears had been occurring to Sybil, who now said, in a low voice, as they drew near the stately gate of Rhoscadzhel,

"I doubt, dearest mamma, whether this is a wise proceeding on our part; if we have the legal right to call ourselves Trevelyans, that right should be placed for proof in legal hands."

"If we have—" began Constance, impetuously, and then became silent, for she felt that the views of her daughter were, perhaps, the most correct.

The elaborate iron gate, and its tall granite pillars, each supporting a grotesque Koithgath, surmounted by a coronet, were left behind, and they proceeded along the stately avenue by which we have so lately seen Richard passing as chief mourner at the funeral of the old lord; and now, as the porte-cochere (which bore a double hatchment) was approached, came a new perplexity to the mind of Constance. How was she to *announce* herself?

As "Lady Lamorna," where there was already one who called herself so; "simply as "Mrs. Devereaux," or as "a lady wishing an interview with Lord Lamorna"? But from the utterance of his name in this instance she shrunk.

The pampered servants, on seeing that the ap-

proaching vehicle was only a carriage hired from the neighbouring inn, and not an equipage having coats of arms and showy liveries, were somewhat slow in answering the summons at the bell; but as the hall door stood open, and, luckily for the perplexed Constance, Mr. Jasper Funnel, the solemn, portly, and intensely respectable-looking butler, was lingering there, she asked if she could "see his master."

Now this was a mode to which Mr. Jasper Funnel was all unused, and he might have been disposed to summon "Jeames" or "Chawles" to attend to her; but there was now a hauteur in the bearing of Constance that thoroughly bewildered, if it failed to awe him.

"Master, mum?" he stammered; "his lordship is at home, but engaged with General Trecarrel—I can take in your card, however."

"I have not my card-case with me."

"What name, then?"

"It matters not—just say——"

"Perhaps, mum, relations of the family?" suggested Funnel, perceiving the depth of mourning worn by the two ladies."

"Yes—near relations, indeed," replied Constance, restraining her tears with difficulty.

The man of bins and vintages, who thought he knew the branches of the Trevelyan family through

all their ramifications, looked still more perplexed; however, he said, with a still lower bow,

"This way, mum—please to follow me," and desiring their driver to await them, Constance and Sybil entered the mansion of Rhoscadzhel.

As if to tantalise them by a display of all they were perhaps to lose, or had already lost for ever, a valet, to whose care Mr. Funnel now consigned them, conducted them by a somewhat circuitous route, as all the suites of rooms were not in order, the family having arrived unexpectedly from town.

Passing through the marble vestibule, an arch on one side of which opened to a gay aviary, and one on the other to the beautiful conservatory, they entered a long and lofty corridor, where the soft carpet muffled every foot-fall, and where were the objects of *vertu*, accumulated by several generations of Trevelyans; a veritable museum it seemed, of glass cases filled with quaintly illuminated vellum MSS., in fine old Roman bindings, red-edged and clasped; old laces of Malines and Bruges; Chinese ivory carvings, delicate as gossamer webs; Burmese idols; Japanese cabinets, covered with flaming dragons; Majolica vases, where rosy cupids, grotesque tritons, nude nymphs, and shining dolphins, were all grouped together; Delft hardware of odd designs; Etruscan cups, cream-coloured or crimson, with slender black demoniac figures thereon; mediæval

suits of armour; family portraits of dames in ruffs and farthingales, and of past Trevelyans, all well-wigged, cuirassed, and armed: some with Bardolph noses and paunches of comely curve, suggestive of sack and venison; the chiefs of these being Lord Henry, who was Governor of Rougemont Castle for Queen Elizabeth, and Launcelot, the cavalier-lord, who sought shelter in Trewoofe from the victorious Roundheads.

The refined and cultivated taste of Constance could well appreciate all these objects; but now, as one in a dream, her eyes wandered over those walls where many a gem of art was hanging; the soft-eyed and white-skinned girls of Greuze; the bearded and doubleted nobles of Vandyke; cattle, fat and lazy-looking, by Cuyp; hazy sea-pieces by Turner, and more than one lovely Raphael; but then her every thought was turned inward; and as if to support herself, she retained Sybil's tremulous little hand, on which her clasp tightened, as the servant, who was clad in mourning livery, with a black cord aiguilette on each shoulder, opened noiselessly the half of a folding-door, and ushered them into that splendid library where her husband had found his proud old uncle dead at the writing-table, and Downie (with the unsigned deed) hanging over him, with confusion and disappointment on his usually stolid visage.

"Visitors, my lord," said the servant.

And to add to the perplexity of Constance, she found herself face to face with the whole family group—the whole, at least, save one, her nephew Audley.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### HUMILIATION.

THE statements made to Audley Trevelyan by his father as to the dubious position of the two ladies at Porthellick—artful statements which seemed, without collusion, to corroborate so much that Mabel and Rose Trecarrel hinted or openly advanced—had seriously grieved and perplexed him. Thus, while loving Sybil and longing for her society on one hand, with the selfishness or vacillation peculiar to many young men, on the other, he began to wish that he had not gone quite so far—that he had been less precipitate in his love-making; but his perplexity increased to utter bewilderment, not unmixed with indignation, when his usually languid mother, with considerable scorn and irritation of manner, informed him that "the person calling herself Mrs. Devereaux" was but an *intriguante*, who had sought to lure his foolish uncle Richard into marriage; and his father admitted that he and others had long suspected his brother of having some low and illicit entanglement.

Now Audley knew that this "*intriguante*" had a son, whose existence might endanger his own succession to a title.

Was this fair, slender and delicate girl, whose gentle image had wound itself about the heart of Audley, and on whose "engagement finger" he had so recently slipped a ring, actually a cousin; but one whom he could not acknowledge—a person whom he dared not marry, in dread of that trumpet-tongued bugbear called "Society"?

He had ceased for some days to write to her. In this he accused himself of gross selfishness; but his father's open threats of withdrawing every shilling of his allowance, of turning his back upon him for ever, and so forth, if he dared to countenance the Devereaux in any way; and his total inability to live anywhere on his subaltern's pay alone, together with the dread of compromising his cold, proud, and intensely aristocratic mother and sister—in fact, it would seem, his whole family too—made him strive to crush in his heart the young love it was so sweet to brood upon; but Audley strove in vain, and began to think that the sooner he was back to India the better for all.

He had been nervous, irritable, and "out of sorts" since he had returned to Rhoscadzhel, and obtaining a passing glimpse of the little white villa as the train passed it, *en route*, had made him worse. He

had procured Champagne and various other vintages too freely from Jasper Funnel; he had broken the knees of a favourite horse; ripped up the green cloth of the new billiard table when practising alone, and more than once had angrily laid his whip across the back of unoffending Rajah.

On the afternoon of the visit which closes the preceding chapter, his mother who was seated languidly in a deep easy chair near the library fire, playing with a feather fan, while her daintily slippered little feet rested on a velvet tabourette, said in her soft and monotonous voice,—

"I do wish, Audley, that odious dog of yours was dead—shot or lost."

"Why, mother, it was poor Jack Delamere's dying legacy."

"It is such a shaggy, self-willed, huge and savage animal—always about one's skirts or in one's way."

"You are unusually energetic in your adjectives this evening, my lady mother," replied Audley; "poor Rajah is as gentle as a lamb, and I might have found a kind owner for him ere this, however," he added, as he thought sadly of the winning Sybil on whose skirts his splendid pet had been permitted to nestle unrebuked.

"Visitors, mamma!" exclaimed Gartha Trevelyan, a fair-haired and languid edition of her mother, and already, in her sixteenth year, the imitator of all her

tones and ways; "who *can* they be—in a hired carriage, too?"

"Ladies in deep mourning," said General Trecarrel, glancing uneasily at Audley.

"By Jove!" muttered the latter, growing quite pale, as he recognised them from a bay window, and at once quitting the library, descended by a private staircase to where his horse and groom happened to be awaiting him.

"My cousin—he is my own cousin; this was the secret sympathy—the tie of blood that drew us to each other," Sybil was thinking softly, in her timid heart, to keep her courage up, at the very time when he who, without flinching, would have faced a Sikh gun-battery, or a horde of Afghans, was avoiding her, and galloping ingloriously away from what he deemed "a scene—a deuced family row," with a blush on his cheek, shame, pity, and anger mingling in his soul, with the half-formed wish that he had never met and never known her!

Advancing into the room, the mother and daughter bowed, and then stood irresolute. The former had expected to have seen Downie alone; but finding him thus, amid his family, and the General present too, all her pre-arranged and carefully considered explanations and remarks completely fled her memory, and her mind became blank as a sheet of unwritten paper, as Downie, after a rapid whisper

to his wife, over whose colourless face there flashed a look of angry scorn, took the initiative.

His wife, with her everlasting smelling-bottle or vinaigrette and lace handkerchief; her newly-cut novel close by; her pale, dull eyes and unmeaning smile; her "company manners;" her soft white hands, smooth and unwrinkled as her forehead, yet cold and puerile as her heart, was always a kind of bore; but now her *tout-ensemble* had all the impress of insipidity, animated by insolence; for weak though the lawyer's wife was in character, she felt that she was mistress of the situation; and at least *pro tem.*, if not for life, Lady Lamorna.

She regarded the widow with a cold and supercilious stare, to which the former replied by a steady gaze, and each seemed to draw her conclusions of the other in an instant; for "to women alone pertains that marvellous freemasonry, which sees the character at a glance, and investigates the sincerity of a disposition or the value of a lace flounce with the same practised facility."

Downie, too, had his own peculiar acuteness and instincts, sharp and keen, wherever he went; he saw everything in a moment; whoever he met, he read their faces like a book, he marked all their features, deduced their personal characters, just as if he had been intimate with them for a life-time; and a very useful power this had proved to him, in the course

of his legal career; and now, in his mourning suit, he looked like "one of those great crows that are to be seen, apparently asleep, in a meadow in autumn; but which, nevertheless, see everything that is going on around them." The gentle aspect, the forlorn bearing, and uncommon beauty of Constance and her daughter, would have softened any other heart than Downie's; but his was like Cornish granite—the oldest and stoniest of all stones.

General Trecarrel—somewhat nervously it must be owned—shook hands with the intruders, for as such they felt themselves viewed; but the dog, Rajah, alone gave them a welcome by fawning round Sybil, who trembled excessively, and could scarcely restrain her tears, while the dog's recognition of her did not escape the wife of Downie, who drew certain conclusions therefrom.

"Mrs. Devereaux, I believe?" said Downie Trevelyan, calmly, and with his professional smile, as he looked up from the table, which was literally heaped up with letters, many of them being unopened; "to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"You owe it to my sorrow, sir," replied Constance, gathering courage, as her eye caught a portrait of Richard Trevelyan, in his uniform, painted years ago, ere he went to America, and looking just as she had seen him in the early days of their happy lover-

hood; and now the pictured face seemed to smile upon her out of the past; "to the death of my husband—your brother, as you know, by drowning," she added.

He gave her a stare of cold enquiry, over, and finally, through his double gold eye-glass, which he specially wiped for the occasion, and then turning to his wife, said,—

"Gartha, my dear, take your namesake and the boys with you—retire, please, for we may have much to say that must not be said before you."

"Perhaps I—I too, am *de trop?*" said General Trecarrel, a little nervously, assuming his hat and malacca cane.

"Not at all—pray be seated," replied Downie.

"If—Mrs.—Mrs.——"

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Devereaux will excuse you, General, I am sure," answered Downie, as his wife, with her four younger children, sailed haughtily from the room, drawing in her skirts as she passed Constance, whose pretty lip only quivered a little with disdain.

To do him justice, the barrister looked on the widow with something of interest, mingling, momentarily, with his fear and anger—but momentarily only. She was slenderly and so beautifully formed, small featured, and dark haired, with much that was intense and unfathomable in her pleading eyes—

pleading for her children's honour and her own: and there was Sybil, too, clad in the deepest mourning, her high black dress, with its pretty cuffs, and a small white collar round her delicate neck, made her fair skin seem fairer still, and appeared to become the darkness of her hair and eyes better than any other style of dress would have done; but, then, Sybil looked charming in everything!

The little interest died, and Downie regarded them with intense hostility, for he had all "that sublime philosophy which teaches us to bear with tranquillity the woes of others."

"Oh—ah—yes," he said, after a most harassing pause; "you are the lady who lives—in fact, who has lived for some time past, in a villa near Porthellick?"

"The same, sir."

Downie knit his brows, for she accorded him no title, and he was somewhat jealous on the point.

"It was a bold act of my brother to bring you here to Cornwall—a secluded place—almost under the eyes of his own family too!"

"Circumstanced as we were by the eccentricity of his late uncle, it was, perhaps, unwise," she replied, gently.

"I am glad that you admit so much: a little villa near St. John's Wood, or some such place, had been more appropriate for persons so situated."

The eyes of Constance began to flash dangerously.

"My son is Lord Lamorna!" she exclaimed; "and even on his cold-blooded uncle may punish this cruel insult to his mother!"

The General, to whom all this revelation was new and startling, began to feel uncomfortable, and to look quite perplexed; but Downie only smiled a crafty smile, as he said—

"Pooh, my good woman, you are out of your senses; what can be the object of this visit? I am busy—does your carriage wait?"

"Before scandals go forth in our name, I beseech you to consider well, and to read this letter, which will show you who I am and what I am, and why for years we have all borne the name of Devereaux," said Constance, making a prodigious effort to control her great grief and just indignation, as she held the document before Downie; "it is the last my dear, dear husband wrote me."

"Husband—absurd! This is the wildest of wild assertions," said Downie Trevelyan, as he took the letter from her hand, nevertheless; and as he did so, the words of her dead husband came back to her memory, when he said "that proofs of their marriage, beyond mere *assertion*, must be forthcoming;" and now those proofs were buried in the sea.

"You must recognise the handwriting," said Con-

stance, in a tremulous tone; "and oh, sir," she added, as she eyed him doubtfully and wistfully, "you will restore it to me, and not destroy it?"

"Destroy!" said he, sternly; "what are you talking about? I hope I am too much of a lawyer to destroy any document."

"Before witnesses, at least," was the awkward addendum of the General.

Downie's legal eye quickly took in the situation, as detailed by his brother Richard in that letter, which stated that the little chapel of St. Mary, at Montreal, had been burned down three years after the regiment had left the city; that the Père Latour and the acolyte were both dead; that though the Registers had all perished in the flames, the signed copy of the marriage certificate was preserved by Latour's successor, and "*is now in my possession,*" added the letter, the signature to which, "Lamorna," made the reader's eyes to gleam with secret rage; but he merely said,

"Suppose this letter were written by my brother —a supposition of which I do not admit the truth, —who are 'those at home' whom he doubts?"

"You, most probably," said the General, with soldierly candour.

"Absurd, my dear sir," replied Downie, tossing the letter contemptuously to Constance. "This is a fabrication, written to suit the occasion: the church

burned; the Register destroyed; the witnesses dead, too! It is a strange story, and strange chapter of accidents. You lived with him long enough, I doubt not, madam, to learn how to feign my brother's handwriting. This document has not even an envelope—so where are the postal marks?"

"I lost it——"

"Bah! I thought so."

There was a peculiar basilisk flicker in the pale eyes of Downie Trevelyan, and he surveyed the shrinking widow of his brother pitilessly, with a glance of hate—a glance beyond all the eloquence of fury or wrath, for he felt in his heart—or what passed for such—that she spoke *truth* in all this matter, but a truth she would have difficulty in proving.

"Oh mamma—mamma, let us go," implored Sybil.

"And this Dick Braddon who accompanied my brother—the other witness—a worthless old Chelsea pensioner, and so he too is gone?"

"Gone with my husband," replied Constance, clasping her hands and looking upward.

"As my poor brother never yet, to my knowledge at least, prior to his luckless American tour, appended his name to any document as *Lamorna*, we have no means of testing or comparing the signature to your production, were such test necessary—which it is not."

Gathering courage, Constance was about to make some proud response, when Downie, in his (external) character pure and unspotted as his shirt front, said while turning to the General—

"My brother Richard picked up, of course, some of those dissipated habits which are peculiar to the army, and——"

"Oh, pardon me, my lord," began the General, in a deprecatory tone, while inserting his right hand in the breast of his closely buttoned surtout.

"It is true, Trecarrel; you redcoats are a sad set, and here we see the result of an unlucky *liaison*."

"Richard—Richard," wailed Constance, "how hard is all this to bear!"

"Yes, madam," said Downie; "but 'the way of transgressors is always hard.'"

"Transgressors, sir?"

"Against the laws of morality and society, madam. Do not misunderstand me, madam."

"Oh no—oh no," replied Constance, in a choking voice; "I quite understand you."

The General was deeply moved; he advanced a pace or two towards her, and lifted his hand with an air of entreaty; but Downie was pitiless, and added—

"Yes, madam, and not content with seeking to entrap my brother, there has actually been an attempt made, too, to entrap and delude my son!"

"Sir," said Constance, moving towards the door of the library, "I came in hope—I must own, half-desperate hope—of having an explanation from, or a compromise with you—perhaps a recognition of our just claims. Assertion, even backed by such a letter as this, is, I must own, but slender evidence; so a court of law shall prove the rest."

"As you please, madam," replied Downie, rising and ringing a hand-bell deliberately. "Show this—*lady* out. So much for Mrs. Devereaux!" he added furiously, for he was greatly disturbed and ruffled.

A mist seemed before the eyes of both mother and daughter, as they quitted the stately room mechanically, to seek their vehicle at the porte-cochère. Constance kept her proud little head erect, however, so long as she was under observation; for though her heart was wrung with agony as she thought of her children, there was something of a Spartan matron in the outward bearing she affected, and in her perfect power of self-mastery then.

Stared at in the corridor by the wondering and mocking eyes of all the younger children of Downie, who had taken their cue from the manner in which their mamma had gathered her skirts in the library, as if to avoid pollution; stared at too in the vestibule and portal by Mr. Funnel the solemn Butler, by Boxer the rubicund coachman, and by a group of whiskered valets, who all saw that something, they

knew not what, "was hup," they reached the hired carriage that was to take them back to Hayle; and Jeames in powder, wearing "the uniform" of the noble family, remarked to Chawles, a brother of the plush and shoulder-knot, quite audibly, that "they both seemed the lady, quite; but he feared they was only a couple of guv'nesses or companions out of place—a lot as miserable as curates and tutors, and all that sort o' thing."

Constance shivered as if with ague when she drew up the glasses of the carriage, and they took their departure from Rhoscadzhel.

Open war alone could save or sink them now!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### "MRS. GRUNDY."

General Trecarrel, who was an amiable and well-disposed man, felt the utmost regret in having been present at an interview so painful, unseemly, and perplexing. Notwithstanding the calmness, dignity, and confidence with which Constance asserted her claims to wifehood and nobility, he had his secret doubts—which Downie had *not*—as to the legality of the ties that had subsisted between her and his late friend, Richard Trevelyan. Yet he could not but think of her kindly, humanely, and with interest; she seemed so perfectly ladylike, was so gentle and so beautiful.

In short, the old soldier, little given to study character or matters not military, felt sorely bewildered by the strange story so suddenly unfolded by his fair neighbour, and withdrew to think over it and to dress for dinner.

"So that odious woman and the cunning minx, her daughter, are gone at last?" said Mrs. Downie —the acknowledged Lady Lamorna—entering the

carpeted library, softly and noiselessly, in her usual languid and wearied way.

"Yes, Gartha—at last," replied her husband, who was still seated at the writing-table with his head resting on his left hand, for he was full of thoughts that oppressed him.

"You look disturbed, Downie dear?" she lisped, as she sank into her easy chair and resumed the feather fan or hand screen.

"That idiot Audley has complicated matters by forming an attachment for the woman's daughter; but Trecarrel, who goes soon to India now, shall take him off there at once."

"And what was the object of her visit, pray?"

"Oh, she came here to try the favourite Whig scheme—conciliation at any price, no matter how humiliating; and exhibited a letter she had manufactured, as from my brother; but it won't pass with me—no, no!"

"You are right to repel such attempts as this; and I agree with you that Audley had better relinquish what remains of his leave and quit England," she replied, yet not without a sigh, for her son had been but a short time at home, and India was so far away. But anything was better than that he should entangle himself with a girl like this—*her* son Audley, when she had almost registered a vow

"never to syllable a name unchronicled by Debrett;" the idea was absurd, horrible in the extreme!

"Perhaps, Downie dear," said she, after a little consideration, "we are too fearful. I have read somewhere that 'boy and girl cousins never fraternise.'"

"Don't they, by Jove!" growled Downie; "especially when they come to the age of puberty, without having known each other previously. Then the Scots have a proverb about 'blood being thicker than water,' though I can't see it in that way myself. The girl is remarkably handsome, and Audley's affair with her must have made considerable progress ere her letter came into my possession in London."

"Handsome? dear, dear! do you really think so? I thought her very saucy in expression, and a positive dowdy, in a dress made, no doubt, by some Penzance milliner," replied the lady, while contemplating complacently her own magnificent black *moire*, for she did not entertain more charitable opinions respecting the daughter than the mother.

Though more advanced in life than Constance (for she had been married some years before her), the wife of Downie had still considerable remains of beauty, and, despite time and dimples turning fast to wrinkles, she was bent upon being gay, young, and beautiful still. She had an air that decidedly denoted high breeding, with much of languor and

indifference to all that passed around her. She had completely attained that bearing of placidity, utter vacuity or unimpressionability, so sedulously affected or adopted by many among the upper class of English society, and even by their middle-class imitators. However, all the little spirit or energy she ever possessed fired up now, in the conviction that she was the Right Honourable Lady Lamorna, that Audley was one of "England's Honourable Misters," and that Gartha should find a husband among the tufts and strawberry leaves at least.

Downie had not her ambition even in these matters, but had naturally avarice; and his profession had, of course, taught him trickery. "Despair of no man," it has been said: "there are touches of kindness in natures the very roughest, that redeem whole lives of harshness;" but to have sought for charity or kindness at the hands of Downie were a task as easy as taking a bone from a famished tiger.

That day, at the dinner-table, after the ladies had withdrawn, and Downie, the General, and Audley were lingering over their wine (or wines rather), the conversation naturally turned to the recent visit of Constance and her daughter; and a painful theme it proved to the young officer.

From General Trecarrel he had previously obtained a narrative of all that had passed, and though

he thanked Heaven that he had been absent, his heart was preyed upon by many keen and conflicting emotions. He loved Sybil tenderly, he acknowledged to himself; but could he think of marriage with her, when she was the daughter of a woman in a position as dubious as that of Constance was now openly declared to be—one, moreover, whose claims were so startling, and whose allegations were, as his father called them, so daring as to merit criminal prosecution,—for so had the lawyer said in his wrath and the strength of his own position!

Intense pity for the girl mingled with his passion for her, and added to his great perplexity; and thus, while his cheek alternately flushed and grew pale, he sat with half-averted face, and the fingers of one hand buried among his thick brown hair, irritated by the conviction that his father's cold, keen, and scrutinising eyes were bent loweringly upon him, while in silence he heard the General bluntly urging him "if he had any tender views in *that* quarter, to get rid of them as soon as possible, and be off to join his regiment;" for to Trecarrel military service seemed a cure for every human ill.

"But the letter she showed you?" pled Audley.

"That letter, sir, I have already denounced as a most daring forgery!" replied Downie, with as much energy as his usually quiet manner permitted.

"Could she—one so eminently like a lady—be guilty of such a crime?"

"Your uncle's mistress would be, of course, familiar with his handwriting."

Audley felt his heart vibrate painfully at this injurious but, as the circumstances seemed to stand, not inapplicable term. Compassion and tenderness pleaded for the dove-eyed Sybil; but policy, society, or the promptings of "Mrs. Grundy" urged that he should, nay must, relinquish all thought of her for ever; so while sitting there, sipping his golden-tinted château yquem, and playing with the embossed grape scissors, to all appearance very calm and quiet, a storm of doubt and shame was struggling in his heart with love; "for this passion," says Lord Bacon, "hath its floods in the very times of weakness, which are great prosperity and great adversity, both which times kindle love and make it more fervent." And now Sybil was in an adversity of which he knew not the actual depth.

"To me it seems that you are somewhat severe in this whole affair, General," said he, after a pause.

"God forgive me if I am so!" replied Trecarrel, earnestly.

"Suppose this girl's position to be all you advance, if we love because we like and admire each other, are we to be censured?"

"Then who the devil should be censured?" said his father, with asperity.

"Destiny."

"Pshaw!" said Downie; "this is mere romance—mooning!"

"And deuced unlike one of the 14th Hussars," added Trecarrel.

"The very rubbish of which dramas are made."

"You are right, Downie; but, till now, I always thought this young fellow of yours was rather fond of my girl Rose."

Audley coloured deeply, and assisted himself to wine, as he said—

"I greatly admire both Miss Trecarrel and her sister Miss Rose; but I have not the honour to stand higher in their favour than that of others."

"But this girl Devereaux——" his father was beginning passionately.

"Excuse me, dear sir," interrupted Audley, "if I beg that you will cease to taunt me on this painful subject. The tenor of the letter she wrote to me—the letter which you found on my desk, and which in all fairness you should not have read—a Lieutenant of the Line not being exactly a schoolboy—sufficiently evinced that we were on terms of affection and intimacy. I knew not then who she was, or who her people were. I had saved her life, as the General knows, at considerable peril, and

so there grew a tender tie between us; but all shall be ended now," he continued in a tone of emotion. "I see that it must be so, sir. I see also the necessity for not compromising your just title to the rank and place you hold by attaching myself in any way to the fortunes of the Devereaux. So I implore you to let the matter cease, or I shall quit the room—yes, even the house itself, so surely as I shall ere long quit England, perhaps never to return!"

"I thank you for this promise, Audley," said Downie emphatically; "and when once with your regiment, you shall find your allowance most amply increased."

"For that I thank you, sir," said Audley, sighing.

"I am richer now than when you were in the Hussars."

"And out of that wealth, Downie—I beg pardon, I mean my Lord Lamorna—I trust you will do something handsome now for poor Dick's widow and orphan?" blundered the General.

"Widow and orphan!" repeated Downie, with growing anger.

"Well, widow in one sense."

"In what sense?"

"A widow of the heart," persisted Trecarrel, reddening to the roots of his grizzled hair. "She and her pretty daughter have suffered a fearful

stroke of fortune—and even poverty may not be the most severe trial before them."

"I shall settle a small sum on the mother, perhaps," said Downie, reluctantly; "and get the girl, if you wish it, a situation as companion at a distance from this."

"Companion? That is a kind of upper servant who must wash the spaniel, and feed the parrot," said the General, testily; "supervise the maid that dresses her mistress's hair, read novels aloud, and sermons on Sunday; write invitations, and answer them; pay all bills, and stand all manner of vapours and ill-humours, for thirty pounds per annum and a *quiet home!* Come, come, Downie, d—n it," added Trecarrel, "you might do something more handsome than that for a daughter of Richard Trevelyan."

"Sir," replied the other, becoming slightly ruffled by the old officer's perfect bluntness, "when certain people in this world cannot get white bread and wine, they should content them with brown bread and water; they must also work, if they would not beg. I think that I shall have done enough if I do what I propose for the daughter; and as for the mother, through my humble endeavours, a housekeeper's place or the matronage of a lunatic asylum may be procured for her, if she is in poverty, and if her want of previous character could be tided over

with the Board of Guardians. By her daring claim, she has certainly striven to injure me and all my innocent family," added Downie loftily; "yet I do not wish evil to happen to her."

"Whether we wish it or wish it not, neither will come according to our mere human desire," retorted the General; "so pass the Madeira, please, Audley, for here comes Funnel with the coffee—a hint that we are to join the ladies in the drawing-room."

Downie Trevelyan had always had his secret fears of the family in the villa at Porthellick, and he knew not exactly how strong their claims upon his dead brother might be. However, he had lost no time in having himself fully served heir to the late lord, on the loss of the steamer "Admiral" becoming an ascertained fact; and, though a lawyer by profession, he now literally loathed the sight of the circulars and letters that poured in upon him on his accession to rank and fortune. There were legal details to be filled up, dry formalities to be gone through with perplexing repetitions and minuteness; there were entreaties from tradesmen that "his Lordship would not change the family custom," and applications of a similar nature from town and country agents to retain their agencies, &c., &c. Then there was "the suit of those Devereaux," as he called a bulky and menacing document which a shabby-looking fellow deposited at Rhoscadzhel one morning, with lists of

the vexatious papers required for the defence—all the preparation of "some hedge-lawyer—some low legal desperado," as Downie styled him; for he now himself felt, in the tone and tenour of these legal letters and documents, the pointed stings he had for years past so pitilessly planted in others.

The legal document had the effect of completing all the silent arguments of Mrs. Grundy in the mind of Audley. But a few days ago, he was so happy in the conviction that he loved Sybil and was beloved again; and now he saw the necessity for action and resolution, and alike quitting her and England.

He seated himself at his desk one evening for the purpose of writing an explanatory or, if he could achieve it, an exculpatory and farewell letter to Sybil; but, after various attempts, he had got no further than the date, when Mr. Jasper Funnel entered the room, with a little sealed packet on a silver salver.

It had just come in the household despatch-box from Hayle, and bore the Porthellick postmark, so he tore it open with trembling hands.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A LEGAL "FRIEND."

CONSTANCE never smiled again; yet in the presence of Sybil she never gave way to the paroxysms of passionate grief that came over her when she was alone or in the seclusion of her own chamber. Wealth and title, so long looked forward to in the years that were gone, seemed alike most worthless now, save that with the loss of these her children lost their position in life, and herself her name and honour! Ever present was the idea, Oh that her husband could look up from his grave, and see the impending ruin and desolation of their once-happy home! for, as we have already said, their means of subsistence died with him.

And now, how were they to live? The present time was agony; the future dark and gloomy.

Paragraphs, the tenour of which proved intensely annoying to Downie Trevelyan and all his family, and which were painful and degrading to Constance and Sybil (for such they felt them to be), began to find their way into the local and even the London

papers, under exciting titles or headings, such as "Singular Case of Presumption," or "Insanity," "The Cornish Widow again," "The Lamorna Peerage," and so forth; and Messrs. Gorbelly and Culverhole, as "his Lordship's solicitors," in writing answers or contradictions to some of these effusions, were but too happy, by such legal advertisements, to mix their somewhat obscure and vulgar names with the affair.

Audley read those insulting notices, assertions, and contradictions with infinite sorrow and pain, for then Sybil's pleading and upbraiding eyes would come before him. Through such uncourted publicity, however, the mother and daughter began to find themselves coldly viewed by neighbours now. The rector ceased to come near the villa; the village doctor whipped up his horse as he passed the end of the willow avenue; and even the usually friendly Trecarrels left for town—rumour said correctly, for India—without paying another visit, though perhaps, as theirs had never been returned, they could not do otherwise.

All the charity and good they had performed, in all the necessities relieved, all the ailments alleviated, all the countless little kindnesses done, went for nothing now; for the world is a malevolent and censorious one; and that devilish maxim of Rochefoucauld, that people feel a strange satisfaction in

the misfortunes of their best friends, was fully exemplified. Constance's new and startling assertion of rank and position, however meekly done, formed excellent food for the tongues of the malicious and vulgar, who exist everywhere. She had to bear unjustly the contempt of many, the ridicule of all; so that her pretty villa became daily less and less a home.

From the tenour of that horrible interview at Rhoscadzhel, where every word that passed seemed as if burned into her heart with letters of fire, Sybil felt a sure conviction that all must and should be at an end between herself and Audley Trevelyan. The treatment of her mother, of her absent brother's claims, of her own, and of her dead father's memory, his will and wishes, all required this sacrifice at her hands; so resolutely and calmly—though a few tears rolled silently down her cheek the while—she drew his diamond ring from her "engaged" finger—an engaged one now no longer—and making it up in a packet, together with a few letters he had written to her, she despatched it, addressed by her own trembling hand, and without a word of comment, to Rhoscadzhel; and this packet it was which we have just seen Jasper Funnel place in the hands of his excited young master.

Her mother's embraces, tenderness, and kisses were her sole but best reward for acting thus; yet

poor Sybil seemed the very impersonation of beauty, grief, and girlhood bordering on womanhood. The buoyancy of the former was gone; a change had come over her soft and once bright face, which wore a sad and settled expression now. It was that white woe which someone styles "the deepest mourning features can put on."

Her pencil and her piano, each so much the solace of her lonely hours, were, of course, relinquished now; and it seemed as if she should never take to them again. She looked ill, and appeared to be pining: but, sooth to say, it was less the loss of Audley than her mother's grief that affected her. The doctor, when summoned, pocketed his guinea, but did nothing more; so Winny Braddon urged Constance, but in vain, that "their poor chealveen" should be taken to the nearest *Mêan-tol* (or Holed Stone) so that she might try the sovereign old Cornish cure for all mysterious ailments, by creeping through the orifice thereof; for in the ancient duchy, as in some parts of Ireland and the remote Scottish Isles, where such natural or artificial perforations were used of old by the Druids to initiate and dedicate their children to the offices of rock-worship, they are still regarded with superstition, as possessing the gift of effecting miraculous cures.

Constance, too, was ill, and in the excess of her grief and lowness of heart, she fancied herself worse

than she really was; and ever present was the thought, how perilous the lonely path of life would be to a girl so beautiful as Sybil, if she—her mother —were taken away by the hand of death before another and fitting protector were provided. Morbid at times by sorrow, this reflection made the breast of Constance a prey to the most craving and clamorous anxiety.

But a short time before, and their worldly prospects had all been so different—so brilliant and happy. Now all was dark indeed! When she thought over all the baronial splendours of Rhoscadzhel, and the many mementoes of her husband which must be there, something of hatred for the invaders of her children's patrimony and her own marital rights began to mingle with her dull despair of ever proving that she had the latter; and with all her constitutional gentleness, when she recalled the glance bestowed upon her by Mr. Trevelyan on quitting the library, and the insinuations uttered by Downie against her, in presence of General Trecarrel, too, her blood boiled up within her.

"Oh, Sybil!" she exclaimed one day, after sitting long buried in thought, "some author says, 'there are wild beasts in the human race;' and truly your uncle Downie is one of these. Can it be possible that they had the same parents—he and your frank, generous, and open-hearted papa?—that they share

the same blood, were nursed at the same breast, and nestled together, as I have heard, in the same little cot?"

Sybil was silent; she had, in this view of the matter, but one secret and reclaiming thought. Downie was Audley's father, and she would be merciful.

But it was when inspired by one of those gusts of indignation that Constance received, perhaps unfortunately, a visitor—an attorney from a neighbouring town—who stated that he had heard her strange and painful story, and had come to make a "friendly" offer of his legal services.

Now Mr. Sharkley—for such was his name—was exactly, in many respects, what Downie, in his rage, called him, and was an excellent specimen of perhaps the most dangerous character in society—a needy and unscrupulous lawyer. He was attired in rusty black garments, that seemed to have been made for a much taller man. The collar of his swallow-tailed coat rose above the nape of his neck, while the cuffs nearly reached to the points of his fingers, and the legs of his trousers flapped loosely over his instep. He had a low projecting forehead and keen eyes, the expression of which varied only between intense cunning and the lowest suspicion. His ears were enormous, set high upon his head; and the right one, from being long used as a pen-

holder, projected from his skull more than the left. His features would have shocked Lavater, while Gall and Spurzheim would have augured the worst of his character by the development of his head.

His legal practice—though Constance was in blessed ignorance of the circumstance—was of the lowest kind, and had seldom proved beneficial in a monetary or any other sense to those for whom he unluckily acted as agent; but the fellow could be, when it suited him, suave, artful, and plausible when he had a purpose to serve, and a relentless bully when it was achieved; thus, seeing that though little or nothing could be made of the present case with the hope of success, much might be made of it in the way of money, perhaps, of notoriety certainly, and that in the end he might betray all he knew to Downie Trevelyan for a consideration—with these amiable views, he sought to worm himself as a friend and legal volunteer into the confidence of the otherwise friendless Constance.

Mr. Sharkley heard her story attentively, and committed it all to writing. That her marriage had been duly celebrated in a chapel at Montreal he doubted not, nor the reason for keeping it so secret—the absurd pride of old Lord Lamorna, whose aristocratic prejudices were a local proverb and hence her having, so unfortunately for her own

honour, passed so long under her maiden name of Devereaux with her son and daughter.

But how was all this to be proved?

Père Latour was dead; the records of his chapel had been burned in one of the many conflagrations incident to the city; the certified extract from them had perished in the sea with her husband. Dick Braddon too had been drowned, and the acolyte, the other witness in the little French chapel, had been long since laid under a wooden cross in the little burial-ground that adjoined it. A few letters alone were not sufficient proof to upset in England —whatever they might have done in Scotland— the title and succession of a wealthy peer already in possession; yet nevertheless Mr. Sharkley talked about the instant institution of legal proceedings, having the matter brought before a select committee of privileges in the House of Lords, and so forth, quite as confidently and as pompously as if he was a Q.C. and high-class parliamentary lawyer; and poor Constance felt a glow of hope for her children's future rising in her heart, while he compiled a narrative, took away the letters of her husband, and, receiving in advance a handsome sum for certain imaginary fees and expenses, departed with nearly all the ready money she possessed.

He really attempted, however, to get up a case

against "Lord Lamorna," and hence the bulky and presumptuous document which exasperated Downie; but from the weakness of her cause and the character of her legal adviser it speedily fell to the ground, only to fix a deeper stigma on the hapless and innocent Constance.

Rumours of misfortune and mystery brought all their creditors, now pretty numerous (for during her husband's lifetime they had lived in good style at the villa), down upon her in a pitiless horde.

Denzil, she knew, would now lose the liberal allowance his father had promised him after leaving Sandhurst on appointment; but with tentage, batta, and other allowance, a subaltern can live on his pay in India, when he might starve elsewhere. In her misery Constance gathered some comfort from this knowledge, though ruin and penury—or work for which they were both unfitted—were all that remained to her and Sybil now.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE DOCTRINE OF CHANCES.

And what of Audley, the lover, all this time?

He had written from Rhoscadzhel to Constance, imploring her permission in moving terms to see Sybil once again, and have some farewell explanation with her, ere he departed to India, too probably for years; for, with the usual inconsistency of the human heart, no sooner did he find himself repelled, than he felt the attraction towards her redoubled. This letter had been addressed to Constance as "Mrs. Devereaux;" and, without reflecting that he could not bestow upon her a title already borne by his own mother, she felt fresh anger at the circumstance. Without showing the missive to Sybil, who conceived it might be on some legal business, she cast it in the fire, and replied by an emphatic refusal, adding that if he came near the villa, which they were soon about to leave, her servant, Winny Braddon (she had but one domestic now) had received orders not to admit him.

Undeterred, he next wrote to Sybil, but this

effort proved equally unavailing. Resolved not to add to her mother's distress by any disobedience or duplicity on her part, she showed her the letter unopened; and it was at once re-addressed to Rhoscadzhel, with the envelope unbroken, and Audley flushed to the temples when it was placed in his hand.

He felt himself to be still solemnly engaged to Sybil, yet hopelessly separated from her, through no fault of his own—separated without even a lovers' quarrel. He wondered now at the selfish thoughts which more than once had occurred to him, particularly on that day when he quitted the library, and even the house, in such haste to avoid her, and times there were when he blushed at the memory of it. Relations they were unquestionably by blood, whether there had been a marriage or no marriage; and this made Audley reflect all the more deeply and tenderly on the subject of his severed ties with Sybil.

He wished to restore the ring to her in person, to replace it on her finger as a memento of himself; for the repossession of it made him restless and uneasy, as the crazed Halfheller with his bottle-imp; and if he was to do this, there was no time to be lost, as he had but one day to spend in Cornwall now.

The wild longing or craving to see her once

again, to have an explanation of some kind—he knew not what—but beyond anything a letter could contain (even were she permitted to receive it), still inspired him, though prudence might have suggested the utter inexpediency of further interviews between them, circumstanced as they were. Audley, however, was not of an age, neither was he of the temperament, of one to play the part of casuist.

"Why may I not baffle them all—this strange mother, who can be so winning and yet is so repellant, my cold and calculating father too—and carry off the dear girl in defiance of all and everything? This very night I might do it," he pondered: "the train in an hour or so would set me down close by her; and if we make allowance for human frailty and the 'doctrine of chances,' why the deuce should I not succeed, for I know that she loves me?"

He started from a deep and easy library-chair, in which he had been seated, enjoying a pipe of cavendish, as this idea, or chain of ideas, occurred to him; but then calmer reflection suggested a view of the future—his father's rage, his proud mother's disgust, his allowance cut off, and no home for his bride in India, but barrack accommodation or a subaltern's bungalow.

"No—no—by Jove, *that* would never do!" he

muttered, and reseated himself,. Yet he was resolved to see her, if he could. Perhaps old Winny Braddon might not have a heart so flinty as her mistress; and even if she had, it might not be inaccessible to temptation; so that night, when dusk was closing over land and sea, saw Audley Trevelyan speeding along the Cornwall Railway, with no very defined idea, save a desire to see, to speak with Sybil, and to hold once again her little hand in his, ere he left the country, it might be for ever.

The train had been unaccountably delayed; so the hour was late, almost close on ten, when he passed down the avenue, and found himself near the villa. To hope to see Sybil at that unwonted hour was absurd; but, after having come so far, he could not deny himself the pleasure of hovering near the place which, from its association with her presence, had for him so great a charm.

Thus it was with much of tender interest he surveyed the façade of the little villa, the walls and rose-bound portico of which glimmered white in the light of the stars; for, as yet, the moon had not risen, but he could not fail to observe with genuine concern that the stables, as he passed them, and the coach-house too, seemed empty and deserted; for the little phaeton and its pretty ponies, so long the pets of Sybil, had been sold, with many other things, to furnish fees for the grasping

Mr. Sharkley: moreover, the villa was ticketed *to let.*

There might be company, guests, or visitors at the villa; if so, even at that hour, he might perhaps see at least her figure. But no; as he drew nearer, all seemed dark and silent,—on the entrance floor at least; and now the barking of a watch-dog from its kennel near the house made him pause and consider how strange it was that he should be prowling thus, like a housebreaker in the night, when he might, under happier auspices, have been an honoured and welcome guest.

Constance and her daughter had evidently retired for the night, lights being visible in their bedrooms only. That of Sybil, he had chanced to know, was in the north wing of the house, and faced the garden, through the iron gate of which he could see a ray of light from her window falling on the trees, parterres, and shrubbery.

The iron gate was locked; could he but reach her window, he might leave a message for her pencilled on a calling-card,—for to write by post was hopeless; yet he should like her to know in the morning that he had been lingering so near her. Through the iron bars he looked most wistfully at the lighted window, where once or twice the candles cast a flitting shadow on the blind. Could he but attract her attention, make her aware of his presence, and

exchange a word or two; perhaps he might have an interview with her, though that would be unseemly, and what she would not probably consent to; and yet, after relinquishing the handful of gravel he was about to toss against the window, he suddenly resorted to a plan, which, if discovered, would prove more awkward still.

The locked gate barred all entrance to the garden; but he perceived that a great espalier had its branches trained over all the wall, forming a solid and veritable ladder from the ground to its summit. The place was sequestered; the hour lonely, and every moment of delay might be perilous, for if she had begun to disrobe, he would be compelled to retire, so Audley proceeded at once to scale the barrier, that he might descend on the other side.

This proceeding was bold, rash, and rude, perhaps; but he had no other resource if he would see her ere he left Cornwall, which he must certainly do, by an early train on the morrow. With the speed of lightning, his thoughts reverted to their brief but pleasant past, and to every passage of their acquaintance; their first meeting beside the moorland tarn; her rescue from the Pixies' Hole; their solitary walks, and that one delightful hour in yonder conservatory, and he felt assured that she, at least, would forgive his present temerity.

Other ideas flashed through his mind, as he clam-

bered from branch to branch, feeling them yielding the while under his feet as he tore or wrenched them from the masonry. He felt that his real object might be doubted; that his position was anomalous and improper, and might compromise the girl he loved. What would the mess of the Hussar regiment he had left, or that of the Light Infantry corps he was about to join, think if they saw him now? What would his cold-hearted, legal "papa" —his proud, aristocratic, and unimpressible mamma have thought of such an adventure; and in fancy he saw the stern grimace of the former, and the latter using her vinaigrette and fan with unwonted vigour, at the idea of her son visiting any lady thus —more than all, the daughter of "Mrs. Devereaux!"

Then fears occurred to him that some change might have taken place in the internal arrangements at the villa, and that the window before which he found himself, after dropping noiselessly into the garden, might open to the room, not of Sybil, but her mother, or old Winny Braddon!

Trusting to his doctrine of chances, he hoped this might prove a lucky one.

The blind of the window (which opened in the French fashion down to a flight of steps) was not completely closed; thus he could see the whole interior of a spacious and handsome bedroom, nearly in the centre of which stood a dressing-table

and mirror festooned gracefully with white lace, and before it was seated Sybil in her dark mourning dress, with her chin resting in the hollow of one hand, the elbow being placed upon the table. Her other arm hung by her side, and she seemed lost in thought, for her eyes instead of gazing into the large oval mirror, wherein, by the light of two tall wax candles in ormolu holders, her own loveliness was reflected, were bent upon vacancy, or the floor.

Sybil's usually pale and always pure complexion, was paler now; thus her eyes, their brows and lashes, and the masses of her hair seemed by contrast to be very dark indeed; and the latter in rich profusion fell over her shoulders and back below her waist. In the background of this pretty picture, stood forth the white and elegant draperies of her bed, the festooned muslin of which hung in vapour-like folds, over curtains of rose-coloured silk, looped up by white cords and tassels of the same material.

A glance enabled Audley to take in all these details, and his breathing became a series of sighs as he regarded Sybil, who sat quite motionless and sunk in reverie. He flattered himself that she was thinking of *him;* but it was not so; she had just concluded a sorrowful letter to Denzil, her only brother, and her thoughts were far away with him, or with her mamma and all their coming troubles; for all those luxuries by which the wealth and taste, and

more than all, the love of her dead father had surrounded them, were about to be relinquished now, and ere long grim poverty would be staring them gauntly in the face.

At times her nether lip quivered; the tears began to roll over her cheeks, and as a sigh escaped her, the heaving movement of her neck and shoulders made more apparent their graceful character and undulating curve. Then suddenly, as with her quick white fingers she was proceeding to coil up the tresses of her hair for the night, a sound seemed to startle her, she paused, and her eyes flashed and dilated with surprise.

"There it is again—good heavens—what *can* it be?" she exclaimed half aloud, and rising from her seat, as Audley tapped very audibly on the window panes for a second time.

"The deuce!" thought he, "I hope she won't scream—for that would spoil all."

With a candle in her hand, she paused midway between the window and her dressing-table, when he said distinctly,—

"It is I, dearest Sybil—Audley Trevelyan—open the window, and speak with me—but for a moment."

"Audley—you—you—here at this hour!" replied Sybil, with intense astonishment, bordering on fear.

She replaced the candle on the table, clasped her hands, and shrunk back irresolutely, for though she fully recognised the voice that thrilled her heart's core, it was somewhat bewildering to hear it there and at such a time; but summoning courage she drew up the blind, and beheld Audley's whole figure on the upper step, which formed the sill of her window.

"Oh, Audley—Audley—what has happened—what brings you here again?" she asked imploringly.

"The love I bear you," said he, humbly.

"You cannot think of entering here!"

"Far from it, dearest Sybil—I have no such thought; but pardon me for alarming you—pardon me for intruding on you thus."

"I do pardon you, but require you to explain—"

"The object of such a visit at such a time," said he, lowering his voice lest he should be overheard in the stillness of the night.

"Most certainly," said she, weeping.

"Have you indeed discarded me—withdrawn your heart from me, and for ever, Sybil?"

"What would you have me to do, Audley?"

"There is an arbour in the garden—throw a shawl over you, and grant me but a minute to say a few farewell words."

"The moment you first asked for has become a minute—so would the minute soon become an hour."

"In pity to me, Sybil," urged Audley, with clasped hands.

After a little indecision, seeming to listen and perceive that all was still, she threw a shawl over her head, unbolted the French sash, and stepped forth into the garden, where now the light of an uprisen moon fell in a bright flood upon the grass plots, the shining evergreens, and tipped all the leafless trees with liquid silver. There seemed a divine peace over all the earth and sky; but the hearts of these two young people were sad and aching, while Audley pressed a long and silent kiss upon her upturned face, as he led her towards the bower in question.

"I leave this to-morrow, Sybil," said he, as he seated himself by her side, and took her hands caressingly in his own, "and I could not resist the craving, the desire to see you once again, and explain much that my returned letters were meant to elucidate to you and your mamma—that I have no share in the spirit of animosity—hostility—how shall I term it?—cherished by my family against you and yours. With this family quarrel, for so shall I style it, I have nothing to do, and you, dear Sybil, have nothing to do. The employment of a

legal wretch like Sharkley was, of course, a fatal mistake, making much public that need never have been so, and tending greatly to complicate and embitter our affairs."

"My poor mamma had none to advise her," urged Sybil, not heeding a slight tone of reprehension in what Audley said.

"How fortunate has been the chance that led me to you to-night!" he whispered in her ear.

"But to what end or purpose do we meet at all?"

"Fettered as I am—most true!"

Audley could only sigh deeply and press her to his breast.

"Then you—you love me still?" said Sybil, as her slender fingers strayed among his hair, the action in itself a mute caress.

"My darling—I have never ceased to love you!" he exclaimed, gazing tenderly on the pure pale face whose features he could see distinctly, even amid the obscurity of the bower. Her head drooped on his shoulder, and they sat for some minutes quite silent, and full of thoughts that were beyond utterance; yet Audley's delight was not without alloy. He felt that he loved her dearly, and yet, with all the joy of the time, there mingled a selfish regret that he had won her so completely, as their love could never be a successful one.

"And you leave this to-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

Her voice was broken and tremulous. Audley became deeply moved as he heard her weep; and he began to think, as better impulses inspired him, was it possible that he could relinquish or sacrifice a girl so soft and tender, so loving and true, for "Mrs. Grundy and Society?" and had he actually at one time—young-officer-like—felt a little glow of satisfaction when she returned the eye of Vishnu, and he felt himself once more *free!*

In his vacillation there was every prospect of the proposal to elope being made, but prudence made him pause, and an observation of Sybil's changed the current of his ideas.

"Your father has acted most cruelly to poor mamma," said Sybil; "and most unjustly to his own brother's memory."

"My father is a—"

"Oh hush, Audley," said Sybil.

What epithet or adjective he was about to use in irritation at the chances of his allowance being cut off, we are unable to record, for Sybil's quick little hand intercepted it on his lips.

"And now we must separate—you will find the key inside the garden gate, so no more escalading; oh, leave me," she urged, "for if you were discovered—"

"One kiss more—one promise to remember me when I am gone."

"Oh, Audley, could I ever forget you?"

They were lingering now midway between the bower and the house, and the full splendour of the moonlight fell around them.

"And you will take back your ring," he whispered; and once more the eye of Vishnu glittered on the hand of Sybil. "Keep it as the memento of a poor fellow who loves you well—and you must do something more for me."

"In what way, Audley?" asked Sybil, pausing on the upper step, and near the still open window of her room.

"Keep poor Rajah for me; my lady mother won't abide the dog, and I can't take him back all the way to India, as I am perhaps going overland by the desert; and now my beloved girl—dear, dear Sybil—I must leave you, perhaps never to see you again."

A desperate calm seemed to come over Sybil, as she replied,—

"Situated as we are; related as we are, and enemies as my mamma and your parents must ever be, it is indeed better that we should meet no more—yet part as friends."

"As friends—oh, Sybil—as friends!" murmured Audley, becoming more excited as she grew calm.

"Yes—this meeting and parting will form a pleasant memory to look back upon, in years to come, when we are far apart."

Often in after times did these words come back to the heart of Audley Trevelyan.

"And you will always wear my ring?"

"For life—dear cousin Audley—farewell."

She was about to close the casement, her hands trembling and her cheeks ghastly pale, when he urged,—

"I must write to you—under cover to some one—permit me—oh, permit me?"

"I cannot—I cannot," she replied, with a torrent of tears.

"I must—pardon my importunity, darling."

"Go—go, I entreat you—good-bye—farewell."

She was about to shut the French sash, when a voice startled her, by exclaiming,—

"Oh, my God—what is this I see?" and as Sybil started back, Audley found himself confronted by Constance, in her dressing-gown, for she had entered the room, candle in hand, having been roused by the sound of their voices at the open window.

This *dénouement*, so unexpected, was very awkward, and liable to the most serious misconstruction; so Audley's doctrine of chances proved a failure here.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MISCONCEPTION.

LITTLE could Sybil or Audley have foreseen how fatal was to be the ultimate termination of this night's adventure.

The usually sweet and placid little face of Constance was now inflamed with rage and distorted by grief. Her colour came and went, like her breath, rapidly; and through their tears, her dark eyes were sparkling with fire.

A painful silence was maintained by the three for a few moments.

Sybil scarcely understood the cause of her mother's terrible excitement, while Audley, who knew more of life and the world's ways, was filled with genuine shame and mortification on finding that his presence there was misunderstood, and the perfect purity of his intentions misconceived or entirely doubted.

Constance, on the other hand, was full of indignation against him for taking what she not unnaturally believed to be a most unwarrantable and

unfair advantage of their now false position, their growing monetary troubles and disgrace, to insult her helpless daughter; she was furious, therefore, as a tigress about to be robbed of her young, and though fiery in her wrath, yet stately and proud in her bearing as a little tragedy queen.

"How, sir, have you dared to come hither after being forbidden my house?" she exclaimed, in the full belief that Audley, when entreating only that he might write to Sybil, had been forcing a passage into her chamber; "and why at such an untimeous hour as this? Oh shame, sir! shame! Have you neither honour nor compassion? Could you forget that the poor girl you pretended to love was your own cousin?" Then changing suddenly from upbraiding to scorn, she added, "Truly the legal snake Downie Trevelyan is well represented by his son, who would break into my daughter's room like a thief in the night, and seek perhaps to steal her honour, after having stolen her patrimony! Begone, sir, instantly, ere I summon aid and have you exposed—it may be, arrested."

"Oh, madam, do permit me to explain all this," urged Audley almost piteously; but Constance, in the full tide of her indignation would listen to nothing. She showered upon him reproaches, and, summoning Winny Braddon, ordered her to ring the long disused house-bell, cast loose the watch-dog,

and bring assistance. Never had the terrified Sybil seen her constitutionally gentle, placid, and ladylike mother in so wild a gust of passion; and with clasped hands and colourless face, she turned her weeping eyes alternately, with imploring glances, from her to Audley, who seemed to feel acutely that his position was absurd, dangerous, and pitiful; so he was filled by an emotion of shame till it took the phase of irritation.

"Leave us, Audley, I entreat you—see, mamma is seriously ill!" said Sybil, on perceiving Constance press her hands upon her temples, displaying, as she did so, the snowy whiteness of her taper arms, while tottering into a chair. Audley gave the scared girl a glance full of agony in expression, and said:—

"I shall write and explain all, and she will do me justice when calmer; to-night, any attempts at elucidation were utterly vain. I am to blame for my rashness and selfishness in compromising you thus; but not so much to blame as she thinks, however. Your heart at least will excuse and plead for me; and now, dearest Sybil, a long, long—farewell!"

He was gone!

Sybil stayed not to listen to his departing steps, but sprang to the side of her mother, who, weakened by past sorrow and emotion, had felt this episode in

all its real and imaginary details, too much for the nervous system. She had fainted, and now lay back in her chair whiter than a lily.

Full of humiliation and anger, Audley retired, not as he had come, by scaling the wall, but by the garden-gate, which he unlocked, and then quitted the place, resolving to write to Constance fully on the morrow. Irresolute and infirm of purpose, he continued to linger near the villa, as the chill hours of the morning succeeded each other, and it was far advanced ere he thought of seeking the vicinity of the train that was to take him home. He saw the day-dawn spread over the sea, and the shadows of the land, with its rocks and precipices cast, by the level sunlight, far across its brightening waters. He saw the gray mist rising from the valleys and rolling up the brown mountain sides, as it did so revealing new ravines and hollows it had hitherto concealed. He saw the red rays light up the mighty headland known as Willapark Point; all the barren ridge of Resparvell Down, and all the rocks and foam, and broken shore about Tintagel and Trevana tinted with marvellous beauty, and varied light and shadow, by the morning sun; and inland, Little Minster church, secluded in its nook among the hills; and from an eminence which he ascended, he could see amid the dun-coloured moorland, the lonely tarn and huge rock pillar where he had first met

Sybil Devereaux; and with these all her presence, and the nameless magnetic charm she possessed in her own person, came vividly home to his heart. When the hedgerows that intersected the landscape would be green and those enclosures of stone coped with turf in the Cornish fashion, would be covered with wild violets, daisies, and kingcups; and when yonder groves of sycamore, ash, and elm, and the cherry orchards should be covered with the bloom of summer, half the world would be lying between him and Sybil!

He stifled the emotions that were rising within him, hurried to the railway, and throwing himself into a well-cushioned first-class carriage (after "tipping" the guard, that he might be free from intrusion), overcome and weary with the excitement and events of the past night, he sank into a profound slumber, and reached home in time to have a refresher of iced brandy and soda from Jasper Funnel before that stolid functionary rung the breakfast-bell, and before his somewhat unusual absence had been discovered by any one save his valet.

From Rhoscadzhel he wrote immediately to Constance, explaining that the sole object of his visit to Sybil was to bid her farewell, and entreating her pardon for the misconception and annoyance he had caused. To enable her to reply, he delayed his

departure two days, but in vain. However, the circumstance of his humble and contrite letter being returned, not to himself, but under cover and unopened to his father (whom she addressed as "D. Trevelyan, Esq., Barrister-at-Law"), thereby causing a fresh family explosion, completed the full measure of his chagrin; and the young officer felt deeply stung by the contemptuous manner in which it was tossed to him across the breakfast-table.

"There, sir," said Downie, bitterly; "there is your precious production; and remember that a fool should never post his letters till twenty-four hours after they are written. I suppose we shall next have notice of an action filed against you, for breach of promise by that scoundrel Sharkley—Devereaux *versus* Trevelyan!"

That evening saw Audley depart from Rhoscadzhel.

He repaired at once to the depôt of his regiment, then lying in Tilbury Barracks, that quaint old tumble-down fort, whose handsome gateway, like a stately Temple Bar, has faced the river for nearly three centuries; and there he strove to forget Cornwall and all the trouble he had encountered, amid the dissipation and amusements afforded by English garrison life to every wealthy young man.

Thus, when off duty, his days were consumed in tandem-driving, pigeon, cricket, or rowing matches;

*déjeûners*, an occasional steeple-chase in Essex or Kent (or a day's leave in London to see the Trecarrels); while his nights were devoted to dining out, dancing, and drinking, billiards, and garrison balls, private theatricals, and, consequently, a fierce flirtation with an occasional pretty actress, despite rouge and pearl-powder.

It has been said that "at no time is a man so prone to fall in love as immediately after his being jilted;" but many a fair one tried her blandishments on Audley in vain; for he had been separated by adverse fortune from, and not jilted by, the object of his attachment. A long journey was before him, and he doubted not that he would get over the memory of Sybil in time.

So passed the weeks till he would have to go to India in the spring of the year; and thus he strove to forget her, who was yet to exercise a wondrous influence on his future life; with the recollection of those kisses that had thrilled his heart to the core, and those soft dark eyes whose beauty made even silence eloquent.

And did he achieve this complete forgetfulness? Time and our story will show.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### REVERSES.

MEANWHILE how fared it with poor Sybil, who knew not whether he was at home or abroad, or had already forgotten her, and married perhaps the more sparkling and showy Rose Trecarrel?

Re-addressing Audley's letter was fated to be the *last* action the right hand of Constance was to perform in this world.

For the two days subsequent to the episode just related she remained in bed, exhausted apparently, sadder and lower in spirit than usual; and on the morning of the third, Sybil, when drawing back the curtains to see if she were asleep or awake, to receive her daily kiss and join in prayer, was inexpressibly shocked and terrified to perceive a peculiar fixity in one eye, and that a corner of her still beautiful mouth was strangely drawn down on one side.

Paralysis had supervened, and poor Constance had totally lost the use of one half of her body!

Summoned in hot haste, the village doctor came,

with his stereotyped professional expression of sympathy. He felt her pulse, repeater in hand, and ominously shook his head.

"Oh, sir, do you think there is danger?" asked Sybil, in intense agitation.

"Hush, child—come this way," said he, and led her from the room.

"God help me, sir—you have something terrible to tell me?"

"I have, indeed; but nerve yourself, for she has none to depend upon now but you."

"None, indeed, save One who is in Heaven."

Her disease, he said, was *embalism;* it came from the region of the heart, and had been gradually but rapidly forming in her system for some time past; anxiety and sorrow had doubtless induced it, and some recent excitement—that night affair, of which the doctor knew not—had brought it to a head. A second shock, he added, must inevitably prove fatal!

With dilated eyes and clasped hands, the unhappy girl listened to this sentence of death, for such it sounded in her overstrained ear and to her aching heart, as the doctor spoke it in an impressive and never-to-be-forgotten whisper, in a room adjoining that in which the sufferer lay. He then paused, and gazed with much of genuine sympathy into the pale face of the startled listener; perhaps he was

mentally speculating upon the probable future of this lovely girl, with whose sad family history he was quite familiar now.

And what was embalism, she asked, in a low and intensely agitated voice.

A species of weed, or little fungus, that grew in the upper region of the heart, from whence it passed, by minute fibres, fine as a gossamer thread, through the blood-vessels, till, by choking the passage of one of them, there ensued the dire effect they had seen. And was it curable? No; yet the patient might linger for months; and, he added, that Sybil must control her grief, nor let the sufferer see by it that danger was apprehended.

The doctor was gone; but he was to come again, and for some minutes Sybil sat like one transformed to stone, unable even to weep, or reply to the excited questions, showered upon her by Winny Braddon, so stunning was the sense of this sudden and unrealisable calamity. She was, perhaps, on the very eve of losing her mamma—her sole relative and friend—that beautiful, and gentle, and loving mamma, to whom she had been quite as much like a sister and companion as a daughter; for, though a parent, Constance was still so young in appearance and manner, and, till their late calamities had come to pass, naturally so gay, happy, and buoyant in spirit, despite the secret of her wedded life.

She rushed to the bedroom, and clasped the sufferer in her arms, pillowing her head upon her bosom, and so for hours she hung about her, that she might have the melancholy joy of her society while yet spared to her; and for a time she almost forgot the grave warning given so recently, to control her emotions, nor excite the now passive and helpless Constance, who, ignorant alike of her own condition and danger, and propped up by cushions, could but gaze at her wistfully, and make efforts to speak that were intensely painful to the hearer.

The doctor had assured her, that "to expect an ultimate recovery was vain; that her mother's life was but a thing of time now—as it is with us all," he added; yet, hoping against hope and these sad words, Sybil was unremitting in her attentions to her parent. Days there were when she rallied a little, and could even move her right hand, but only to become worse subsequently, and to find her breathing more laborious and painful.

The doctor was an honest though not brilliant man, and did his best for the patient, without thinking of fee or reward. Sybil, in her intense anxiety, doubted his skill: but how was she to procure that of others? There were, she knew, great physicians in London and elsewhere, but she was destitute of the means for employing them. Times there were,

when, in her desperation, she thought of writing to Audley; but she knew that her mother would never have approved of such a proceeding; and their parting had been so strange, that she shrunk from the idea as suddenly as it had been conceived, and she thought, as she whispered in her heart the words of a once familiar song, that hers was—

"A love that took an early root,
And had an early doom,
Like trees that never come to fruit,
And early shed their bloom—
Of vanished hopes and sunny smiles,
All lost for evermore;
Like ships that sailed for sunny isles
But never saw their shore."

She thought, too of the fatherly old soldier, General Trecarrel, and then as quickly remembered that he had been present during that humiliating interview at Rhoscadzhel; but any idea of writing to him for advice was crushed finally, when a stray newspaper announced one day, that the General "and his family" had sailed in the *Netley* transport for India, his extra aide-de-camp, the Honourable Mr. Audley Trevelyan, having proceeded overland, to serve on his staff in the new campaign against the Afghans.

Something of secret satisfaction mingled with the sorrow and fear of the lonely girl, as she read this paragraph—which she did a great many times—

satisfaction that Audley had *not* gone in the same vessel with these gay Trecarrels, which he could easily have done, if so disposed; sorrow, that they were so completely and hopelessly separated now, and fear for the events of the coming campaign in which he was to serve, and more than probably her brother Denzil, too. Sybil could little suppose that it was purposely to avoid being quizzed by the Trecarrels about herself, and to avoid the imputation, or too probable danger, consequent to a long voyage with two such handsome and enterprising flirts as Mabel and Rose were known to be, that he had, with a few brother officers, started for the East overland, a less easy and luxurious journey then than it is now.

But Sybil was soon compelled by the exigencies of their situation to exert herself beyond her years and experience, for creditors, we have said, had become clamorous. Everything that could be spared was to be turned into money, and they were to seek another and more humble home. All the beautiful art-treasures collected by the taste of her parents in their continental wanderings, the oak and marqueterie cabinets, the chaste china of Dresden and Sèvres, the quaint Majolica vases, and alabaster groups, with all the most valued household gods, were despatched to the nearest market town in charge of the useful Mr. Sharkly, and disposed of

with a ruinous commission to that somewhat "seedy" personage! and a little time after saw the pretty villa, so long the abode of so much peaceful and sequestered happiness, in the possession of strangers, while Sybil and her mamma were content to locate them in a small cottage which they rented from old Michael Treherne, the miner, and furnished in the plainest manner; but all their debts were cleared, and even Denzil's Indian outfit paid.

To Constance all places were pretty much alike now, for she had become listless and indifferent to external objects; but times there were when much of exasperation mingled with Sybil's grief, at the thought that her mamma—she so gently bred and nurtured, and so petted by her drowned father—she, who should then be in Rhoscadzhel, surrounded by every appliance that wealth, luxury, skill, and rank could furnish, was now in her desolate widowhood, and sore extremity, the inmate of a poor and sordid cottage.

Thus day succeeded day, and weeks rolled on without any change, at least for the better—weeks which seemed so long, heavy and monotonous, that to Sybil the world and time appeared to stand still. No letters came from Denzil now, for he had marched up-country somewhere, and India was not then what it has been since the Great Mutiny of the Sepoys, intersected by railways and telegraph wires; but

Denzil's last epistle was full of unusual interest to Sybil and her mamma.

He had, of course, been duly acquainted by the former of all that had occurred at home, with the startling revelations consequent to his father's journey to Montreal, and his death at sea; and now he should probably meet, ere long, this cousin of his, this Audley Trevelyan, for they belonged to the same regiment, and it was, perhaps, to form a portion of Trecarrel's brigade. And *how* were they to meet—as friends and brother officers, as relations or enemies?—for Audley's father occupied *his* (Denzil's) place in the world or in society, at least.

Relations—pshaw!—could they ever be aught but foes? was the young man's immediate thought, and his sister's boding fear. And so his father was gone—his good, kind father, his friend, companion, and preceptor in many a manly sport. How often had they rode and rambled, shot and fished together in Calabria, the Abruzzi, and Switzerland, and at home in sturdy Cornwall, so many thousand miles away! Only those who are so far from home—so far away as India, with all its strange external influences and objects—can know how keen, and strong, and tender, to the young at least, are the ties of home and kindred, especially as the home-ties decrease in number by distance, change, and death.

Dead—his father dead! The "governor," as he had styled him, like "other fellows" at Sandhurst, his "dear old dad," as he called him in the home that was a broken home now; and as the pleasant face, that he never more would look upon, with years of past affection, came back to memory, the lad had covered his face with his hands, and wept.

"It is only when we have been long at sea and have lost sight of Europe," wrote Denzil, "ay, dearest Sybil, even of Europe, which seems all one country and one home to us, that the Anglo-Indian feels his banishment has fairly begun, and he is to be, henceforth, as some fellow has it, 'among the dusky people of Ind, with whom we have no traditions, no religions, few domestic, and scarcely any moral sentiments in common, and whose very costume (want of it, sometimes, I should say) is only characteristic of a much greater difference of inward nature.' And so I am actually by birth a lord—a lord! I have thought, and many visions of future greatness have floated through my mind—and dear mamma is a lady—Dowager Lady Lamorna. How odd it sounds. Are we all losing our identity; and how is all this to be proved? The past mystery nearly cost me my life when I first joined, and in this fashion:—

"Bob Waller, one of ours, a pleasant but sometimes supercilious fellow, asked me one evening in

the mess bungalow, if 'my people were from the Channel Islands?'

"'No,' replied I, colouring, for I always felt that some mystery existed about us; 'but why do you ask?'

"'The name sounds like a French one,' replied Waller.

"'We are connected somehow with Montreal.'

"'Oh, that explains it,' rejoined Waller.

"'There is nothing to explain,' said I, angrily.

"'Think not?—well—have a cigar?'

"I roughly, perhaps, declined it, so Waller returned to the charge by saying—

"'Your father was once in the Cornish Light Infantry, you say?'

"'Yes—a captain—some twenty years ago.'

"'Strange. I have looked all through the Army Lists, and can find no such name in the corps.'

"This assertion exasperated me (I afterwards found it correct), and I challenged him to meet me the next morning in a grove of peepul trees, outside the cantonments; but duelling days are over—the affair got wind, and each of us was placed under arrest within his own compound till we exchanged mutual promises. Bob Waller and I are excellent friends now, and at the moment I am writing, he is sitting opposite me in his shirt and drawers, for we are having a glass of brandy-pawnee—the alcohol

with water—and a couple of Chinsworah cheroots together; and I must close now, to catch the dauk-boat—as we call the mail."

This was Denzil's last letter, and after its arrival the weeks continued to roll monotonously on, and still found Sybil watching, with unwearied and unrepining zeal, by what she knew to be a bed of death.

Constance could speak but little, and then only to murmur her fears and prayers for the future of her daughter.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### ALONE!

At last there came an evening which Sybil was never to forget.

She had been, for the tenth and last time, at the nearest market-town, where, in the shop windows of a druggist, who combined the dispensing of medicines with groceries, and the cares of a circulating library with those of a post office, she had been fain to display some of her sketches for sale, that she might procure certain little comforts for her ailing mother in their penury. All had been offered to the local public in succession, even to that one which pourtrayed the lonely tarn and rock-pillar, where she had first met Audley, when he came to apologise for his dog's intrusion (why keep such a souvenir now?), and all had been offered in vain. Pleased with the girl's beauty and sweetness of manner, the shopman willingly enough displayed her productions (as decorations, perhaps) in his windows; and there they had grown yellow, blistered, and fly-blown, till they were completely

spoiled. Each market-day she had hoped that some enterprising Hobnail or Chawbacon might fancy one of her sketches of some well-known locality, to ornament his dwelling, but only to be disappointed, for art seemed to be sorely at a discount in the land of Tre, Pol, and Pen.

On the evening of the day in question, Sybil was returning from the town to their new home with a heavy heart. Not a sketch had been sold, and her purse was almost empty; the rain was falling heavily, and a cold, keen blast from the Bristol Channel swept over the desolate and open moorland she had to traverse; and her tears were mingling with the large drops that plashed on her delicate face and sodden hair. She had resolved that on the morrow—come what might—she should take means to dispose of Audley's farewell gift, the *returned* engagement ring; the diamond, she knew, was a valuable one, too much so to find a purchaser in their now humble neighbourhood; but the doctor, or the friendly druggist, who had her luckless sketches, would perhaps advise her in the matter; and with a sigh, in which sorrow mingled with relief and hope, she hastened onward.

The aspect of the district by which she had to pass to reach their present abode, was but ill-calculated to raise her spirit on a wet, stormy, and gloomy evening. In the distance rose the rough

granite summits of the Row Tor and Bron Welli, each nearly some fourteen hundred feet in height, the sides of the former all covered by enormous blocks, the mightiest in Cornwall, piled over each other a very wilderness of spheroidal masses—

"Confus'dly hurled,
The fragments of a former world."

Over these mountain summits, the descending evening mists, cold and grey, had replaced the farewell rays of the red sun as he sunk beyond the sea; the appearance of the former, made Sybil quicken her steps, lest she should be overtaken on the moor, for then she should be able to see but a few yards before her, so sudden and dense are those floating vapours in Cornwall; and the bogholes were perilous. On either side of the way—a mere cart track—stood those lines of upright stones, which are ranged along it at regular distances, and extend all the way from Watergate, over the moor, having been erected at some remote period to mark the path in misty weather; and with a new but not unaccountable foreboding in her heart, for like Constance she was of a delicate organisation and had keen perceptions, Sybil hastened on, till she experienced a kind of sad relief on seeing the light that shone from the window of the little room where now her ailing

mother lay, and where kind old Winny Braddon sat and watched.

Pausing at the threshold, she threw aside her drenched cloak and hat, and strove to smooth her wetted hair, ere she stealthily opened the door.

"How is dear mamma now, Winny?" she whispered.

"She sleeps still."

"Still?"

"Yes—the poor darling; but in her sleep she has been muttering much of the past—dreaming, I suppose; oh, my poor *chealveen*, you're wet, and cold, and weary too."

"Please don't mind me, Winny; but tell me all about mamma."

"What more have I to tell you?" asked the old woman, mournfully; "but you—you must have tea, or something warm; you will kill yourself at this rate, and then I shall have two to nurse instead of one."

"No, no, I want nothing; let me but change these wet things, and then I shall take your place beside mamma's bed."

Sad, sad indeed, was Sybil's heart on this night, for it was a melancholy one in many ways. As she sat by the plain unornamented bed wherein Constance lay, and surveyed, by the light of a single candle, the humble little room, destitute of cornice

and all decoration, with its scanty furniture, she doubted at times her own identity, or whether this was not all a dream, from which she must awake to find herself at home in the villa—at home, in that pretty room where Audley saw her last, and where the windows opened to a beautiful flower garden.

And was this poor, wan and wasted invalid, so helpless and so passive now, her once merry and handsome mamma, whose hands had so loved to stray among her hair; who had hung over her little cot in infancy, and whose nightly and morning kisses would never come again; whose companionship she had shared like a younger sister, and with whom she had spent so many happy years?

All was very still in that sick room.

In the hall, a great old-fashioned Dutch clock tick-tacked slowly and monotonously; without, the night was wild, and prolonged and angry blasts of wind swept over the desolate moor with a bellowing sound, that made the sleeper stir uneasily; and lost in thought, the pale girl sat there listening to the blast, the rain, and the clock, sounds that repeated themselves over and over again in dreary uniformity.

On this night she thought much of her absent brother. She had written to him that very morning, imploring him, if he met with Audley, to be friendly with him, as their secret claims to the

name of Trevelyan and the Lamorna peerage, could never be established now; and thus she hoped and begged that he, like herself, would retain their mother's name of Devereaux, as they had always been known by it and by no other.

Sybil must have dropped asleep, for she started to find the old clock wheezing and whirring as it struck the hour of three; and shivered, for she was stiff and chilled; the candle had nearly burned down, and what Winny Braddon would have called "a shroud" had guttered over the side of it; and Sybil felt fully how cheerless and depressing is the slow approach of morning in a sickroom—more than all, of a morning so hopeless as each successive one proved now.

The rain and the wind were over; the clouds were divided in heaven, and the stars shone out brightly; the weather was calm, and no sound came to Sybil's ear save the tick-tack of the old clock, and the breathing of the sufferer, which seemed laborious and irregular.

Shading the light with her hand, Sybil stole a glance at her mother's face, and an alteration in its expression filled her with such terror, that a cry almost escaped her. The mouth was more distorted, and the eyes—for Constance was quite awake—were regarding her with a strange, keen, sad and weird expression. At that moment, however, Winny,

hearing her young mistress stir, appeared at the door of the room.

"Oh Winny!" whispered Sybil in an agony of alarm, "there is a change come over mamma; go—go at once for the doctor, ere it is perhaps too—too late! No, no; you are old and frail, and the moor is wet," she suddenly added; "get me my hat and cloak—I, myself, shall fly for him."

"No, no, darling; stay by her side—she may not be long spared to you, and I shall go. Past three in the morning, and dark as midnight. I'll take a lantern and be off."

"Oh, thank you, Winny, thank you!" said the girl, kissing the old woman's shrivelled cheek, and with hasty and trembling fingers assisting to muffle her in a cloak, and to light a lantern; and then seeing her issue forth upon her errand with all the speed her love and charity inspired, and her old limbs could exert; and with clasped hands, and a prayer upon her lips, Sybil at the door for a little space watched the lantern (Winny's figure was soon lost amid the gloom), as its fitful light fell in succession upon the grey, upright blocks of the stone avenue that marked the desolate moorland road, till at last it diminished to a spark, like an *ignis-fatuus*, and then she stole back once more to her mother's side.

The left arm of the latter was outside the coverlet

now, and her hand, so snowy in its whiteness, rested on the edge of the bed. With her eyes full of tears, and her heart full of earnest prayer, Sybil knelt reverently down to kiss it, taking the hand between her own caressingly.

How *heavy* that little hand felt now!

Cold, too—its touch startled her. She threw back the curtain; her mother lay motionless with jaw somewhat relaxed, her eyes still, and staring upward. Death was too surely there, but Sybil had never looked upon it, and only felt wildly startled and terrified. She tried to raise the head, but felt powerless.

"Oh mamma—dear mamma, do not leave me! Come back to me, mamma—come back to me!" she exclaimed, in a voice the tones of which seemed discordant and shrill to her own ear. "Is this sleep or death? oh, no! no, not death—NOT death!"

But it was so, and how terribly pale, serene and still, how calm and peacefully she lay, with something of a smile gathering on her lips, like one "who had ended the business of life before death, and who, when the hour cometh, hath nothing to do but to die."

Bewildered and awe-struck, with a wild beating in her heart and in her brain, Sybil drew back; then she stood still and listened.

There was no sound save the pulsations in her own breast, and the odious ticking of the old wooden clock, which now seemed to have become unnaturally loud. Then emotions which appeared to be stifling came over her, and a craven terror which she could not describe, and of which she was afterwards ashamed, as if it had been a sin or crime, possessed her, and she fled from the room, and from the house itself, for she could not remain alone with the dead; and so, crouching down on the wet, damp soil near the entrance door, she muffled her head in her shawl.

A ray of light was streaming out into the darkness, but she could not look upon it, for it came where the dead was lying, and where the light of life had passed away.

"Heaven help me—heaven help me! I am now alone; most utterly alone!" she moaned, and bent her head between her hands, as if the dark waves of thought were flowing over it.

Alas! how much may be condensed—how much felt, and yet never expressed by that one little word —*alone!*

Sybil, however, fainted from excess of emotion, for she was discovered there crouching in a heap by the doctor and Winny, when they arrived together, more than one hour after, when the distant horizon was grey with the coming dawn, and the white fog

was rolling along the sides of the Row Tor and Bron Welli; and thus, in insensibility, had she found, for a time, oblivion to all her sorrows.

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